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William Gibson Interview • Wings of Fury

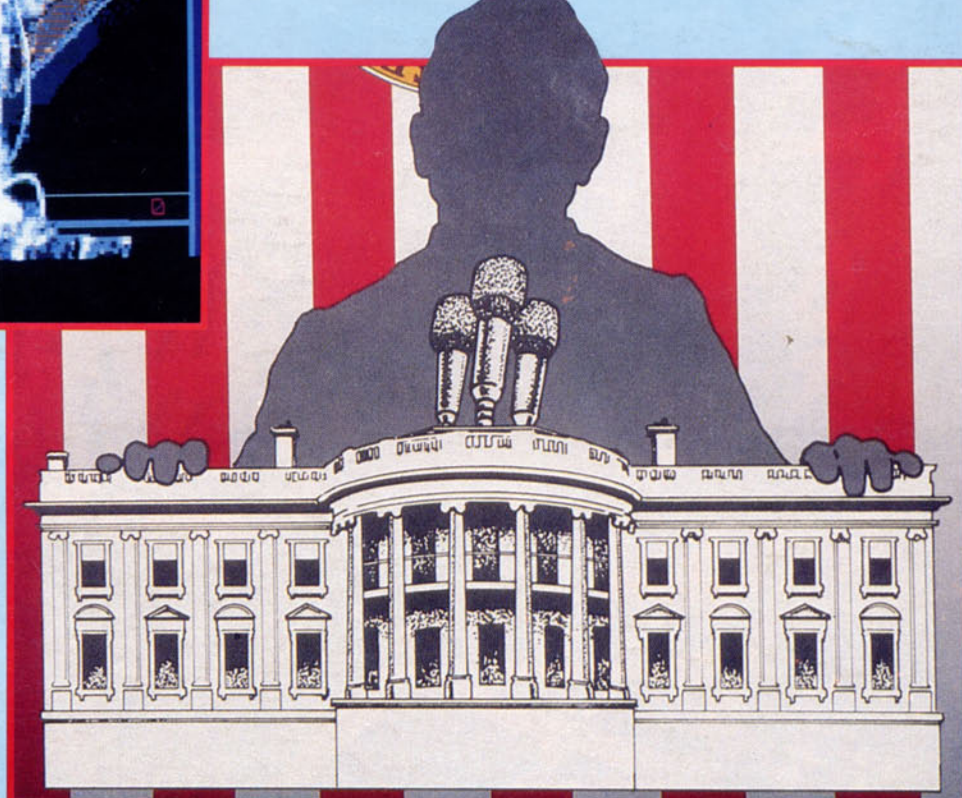
COMPUTER Gaming World

September 1988 Number 51



William Gibson's Award - Winning Neuromancer Now Comes To The Computer

Politics '88



SSI's President Elect - 1988 Edition

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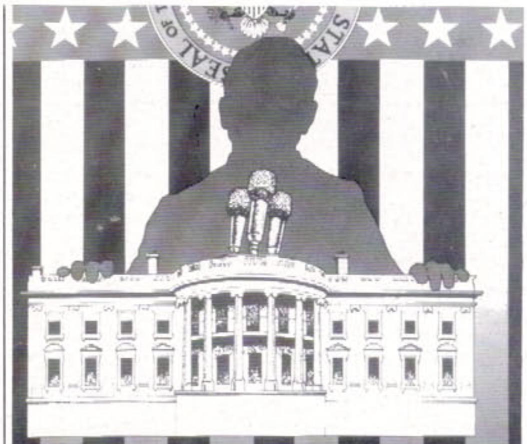
COMPUTER Gaming World

Covering the World of Computer Games For Seven Years

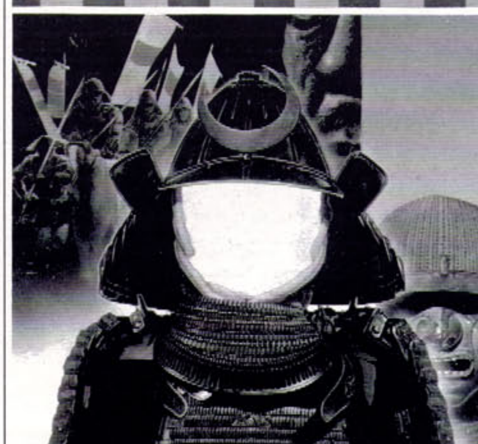
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Psalm 9:1-2
Compuserve (76703.622)
Telephone: (714) 535-4435 Fax (714) 535-1529

Avalon Hill
4517 Harford
Baltimore, MD 21214

THE CIVIL WAR: 1861-1865: American Civil War buffs who have longed for a strategic level approach to the "War Between the States" will be interested in this computerized version of the popular Victory Games boardgame. Steve Estvanik, programmer of AH's *Ram!* (Ancients Naval Conflict), designed the computer version. One intriguing feature is the ability to save battle results and print them out later for an afterbattle report. The game utilizes the actual map as reprinted from the boardgame, so the spartan on-screen graphics are functional, not pretty. The game runs on 128K with CGA card. IBM ($35.00). Circle Reader Service Card #1.

Broderbund Software
17 Paul Drive
San Rafael, CA 94903-2101

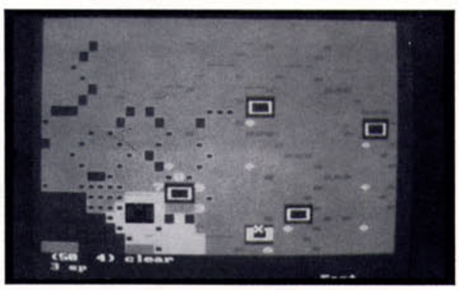
SHUFFLEPUCK CAFE: So, you're the "top gun" around at air hockey and you wish you could find a little fresh blood? Why not trundle over to the "Shufflepuck Cafe" and handle some otherworldly competition. This Macintosh product features great sound and smooth animation. Essentially, players can use the mouse to play distinctive computer opponents at air hockey. Mac ($39.95). Circle Reader Service Card #2.

TYPHOON THOMPSON: SEARCH FOR THE SEA CHILD: *Airheart*, the fast action arcade game with over and under the sea action, was a tremendous success on the 128K Apple II machines. Now, the game is available in a deluxe version on the Atari ST. As "Typhoon Thompson," player attempts to maneuver through and outwit the wily Sea Sprites that live in the archipelagoes of the Aguar's island system. Atari 520/1040 ST ($34.95). Circle Reader Service Card #3.

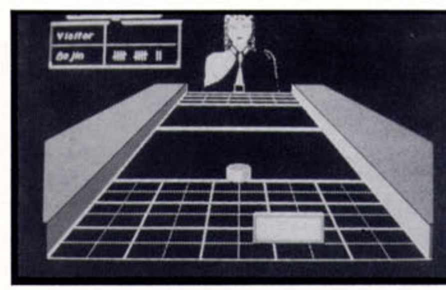
Compu-Quote
6914 Berquist Avenue
Canoga Park, CA 91307

CARD/FAX: Although this product is not a game, those who follow the "grand old game" of baseball will probably be interested. Card/Fax is a database of baseball cards and values for the serious collector. Entry of data is very user-friendly. The user simply types in the "Topps" card number, condition, and year. The computer calls up player name and value. The program can also tabulate the total value of your collection or be a valuable cross-reference for determining the value of anticipated purchases. The program supports a two floppy drive system, but using a hard disk is highly recommended. IBM or Macintosh ($95.00) A preview package is available for $15.00. Circle Reader Service Card #4.

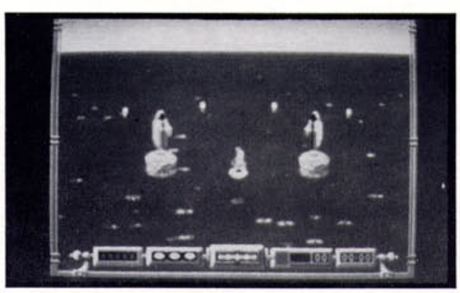
Advertisers



The Civil War



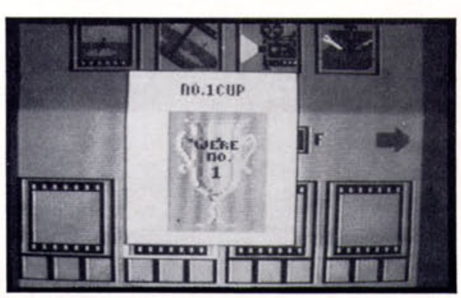
Shufflepuck Cafe



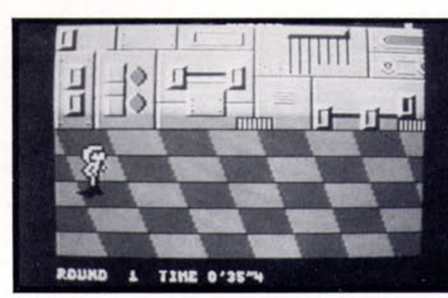
Typhoon Thompson



Cosmic Relief



Home Video Producer



Metrocross

DataSoft
19808 Nordhoff Place
Chatsworth, CA 91311

COSMIC RELIEF: Cosmic craziness is the assumption underlying this action-oriented game. After all, you are trying to locate the fellow who invented the famous "Swiss Army Farm Animal" (the one that can be used as a cow, goat, or even, chicken). Alert adventurers will try to solve the mystery of Professor Renegade's whereabouts based on clues like an Ultra-Dimension Camera built out of old pipe cleaners, a steel-wool pad, and a used copy of J.D. Salinger's "Cather in the Rye." Atari ST ($34.95), C-64/128 ($24.95). Circle Reader Service Card #5.

Epyx
600 Galveston Dr.
Redwood City, CA 94063

HOME VIDEO PRODUCER: Another presentation tool for home video directors who want to customize and polish their productions, this creativity product allows users to personalize ten different video sequences. If the user wants to be more creative, he/she may utilize the construction kit to introduce borders, typefaces, scenic screens, or one of 75 different images from a library of color graphics. Apple II, C-64/128, IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service Card #6.

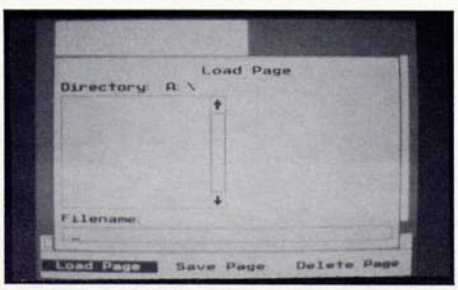
METRO CROSS: This fast-moving European import (from U.S.Gold) offers the chance to put the "race" back in the "rat race." Think of this game as an urban obstacle course through a metropolitan subway. Players attempt to avoid slime, barrels (presumably toxic chemical drums?), potholes and rats. The logic breaks down with careening tires, hurdles, mysterious placement of springboards and unattended skateboards, however. Atari ST, C-64/128 ($24.95). Circle Reader Service Card #7.

PRINT MAGIC: This creativity tool boasts 15 fonts, five built-in greeting card templates, a scratch pad template, an idea pad template, and two graphics disks of pre-designed icons. Of course, users can create their own designs, as well. Three separate disks are included. Apple II series, IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service Card #8.

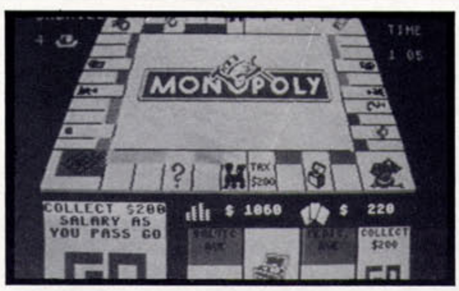
Final Frontier Software
18307 Burbank Blvd #108
Tarzana, CA 91356

SPACE M+A+X: The new version (2.1) of this extremely sophisticated simulation allows for both a hard disk installation or a floppy disk back-up, offers an interactive tutorial, and offers more and clearer project summary screens. This product is used by both engineering and business management courses in U. S. universities, but the lowest level of difficulty has been made easier for the novice player. The new version also offers 9 (instead of 1) game saves and a "Save and Continue" option. IBM with CGA ($59.95). Circle Reader Service Card #9.

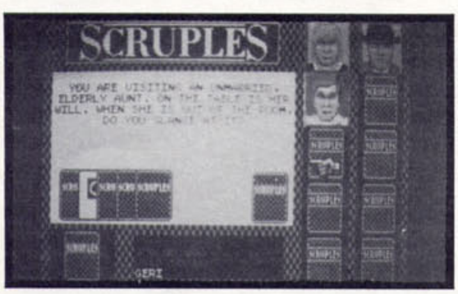
Leisure Genius
c/o Electronic Arts
1820 Gateway Drive
San Mateo, CA 94404



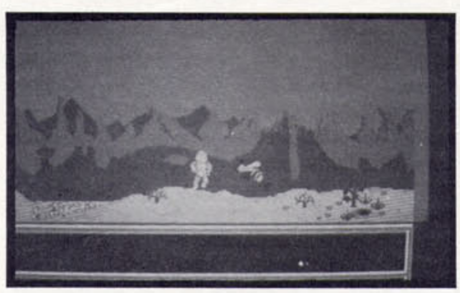
Print Magic



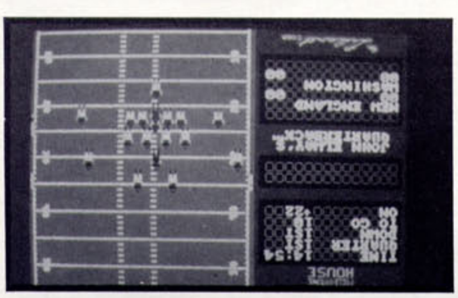
Monopoly



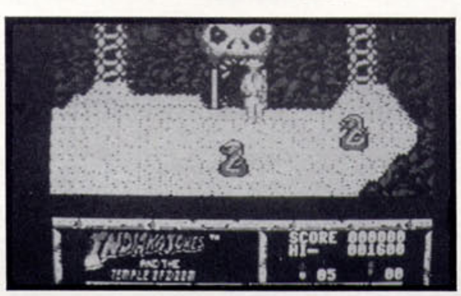
Scruples



Space Ranger



John Elway's QB



Indiana Jones

Conversions Received

For the Amiga:
Questron II (SSI)
Solitaire Royale (SpctHolo)

For the Apple II:
King's Quest III (Sierra) requires 128K

For the Apple IIGS:
Mixed-Up Mother Goose (Sierra)

For the Atari 8-bit:
Video Title Shop: Graphics Companion II (Datasoft)

For the Atari ST:
Speed Buggy (Data East)
Warship (SSI)

For the IBM:
Ultima V (Origin)
Wargame Construction Set (SSI)
Warship (SSI)

For the C-64/128:
Bubble Ghost (Accolade)
Napoleon In Russia (Datasoft)
letters for you (Polarware)
numbers count (Polarware)
opposites attract (Polarware)
The Spy's Adventures in North America (Polarware)

MONOPOLY: This is the authorized computer version of the famous Parker Brothers' Real Estate Trading Game. Besides quality rendered graphics which replicate the board perfectly, the addition of computer opponents makes this an interesting addition to a family computer game library. The computer opponent doesn't make stupid trades like many of the "Public Domain" Monopoly programs, either. C-64/128 ($29.95). Circle Reader Service Card #10.

SCRUPLES: If your idea of a moral dilemma is whether to watch Oprah or Phil, this may not be the game for you. If you are interested in learning about people, society, and even yourself, though, you can be challenged by the computer version of this popular boardgame. Up to ten people can play, but there is a solitaire version which utilizes a group of 64 different computer characters. Atari ST ($39.95). Circle Reader Service Card #11.

Mastertronic
Mesa Business Centre #9G
711 W. 17th Street
Costa Mesa, CA 92627

SPACE RANGER: The title character in this arcade game from Amiga programmer, Robert Clardy, must not only defeat a xenophobic race (as distasteful as the fabled "Three Clawed Tranctrarimian Devil Dogs of Cirrius Gamma" according to the documentation), but avoid the indigenous fauna (like Tyranasaurion, Snub Beaked Turtles, Hoppappes, and Icerunners), as well. The animation seems crudely done, but the landscaped backgrounds are interesting. Amiga ($). Circle Reader Service Card #12.

Melbourne House
Mesa Business Centre #9G
711 W. 17th Street
Costa Mesa, CA 92627

JOHN ELWAY'S QUARTERBACK: In spite of the celebrity endorsement, this is simply a quality conversion of the coin-op arcade hit, Quarterback. The graphics are extremely well-done and the action is fast-paced. The IBM version even features digitized speech. The player's manual is concise and readable and a "Stats Form" template has been supplied for those who wish to photocopy it. C-64/128, IBM ($34.99) with Apple II and IIGS due later this year. Circle Reader Service Card #13.

Mindscape, Inc.
3444 Dundee Road
Northbrook, IL 60062

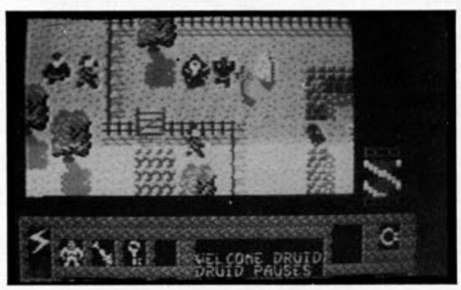
INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM: "Why does it always have to be snakes?" you'll be wondering as you start this action adventure game based on the successful film. Like its namesake, this product is intended to be a non-stop action roller-coaster through a serpentine plot line. Those who liked the original game's look and interface will enjoy this treatment, as well. C-64/128 ($34.95). Circle Reader Service Card #14.

Patch Panel Software
11590 Seminole Blvd.
Seminole, FL 34648-3204

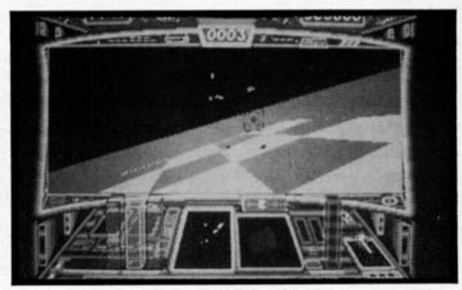
FIGMENT: THE IMAGINATION PROCESSOR: Have you ever played a game of interactive fiction and felt like you could have done it better? Ever imagined that you would like to do a game based on a short story, novel, or movie, but knew that the licensing requirements would be too expensive? Ever wanted to design a game that only you or your friends might want to play? This product functions as a construction set (or development tool) for doing just that. It allows you to design your own adventures. The price is higher than that for games because this will be used by disk-based magazines to generate material, by a trial lawyer to test cases, etc. IBM ($95.00). Circle Reader Service Card #15.

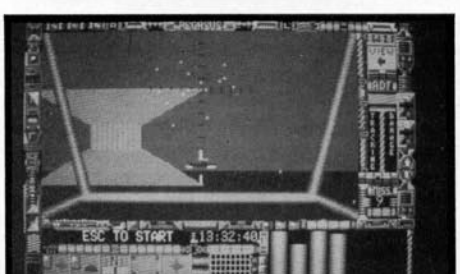
Rainbird Software
3885 Bohannon Dr.
Menlo Park, CA 94025

ENLIGHTENMENT: Hasrinax the Druid faces Acamantor and his demon princes in this joystick-driven adventure game. The player must conjure "elementals" to fight for the Druid in order to progress toward the Dark Mage's domain. Those who fail may earn the rating of "Orc Breath," while those who succeed may attain the level of "Overlord." Amiga ($24.95), C-64/128 ($19.95). Circle Reader Service Card #16.



Enlightenment


Starglider II

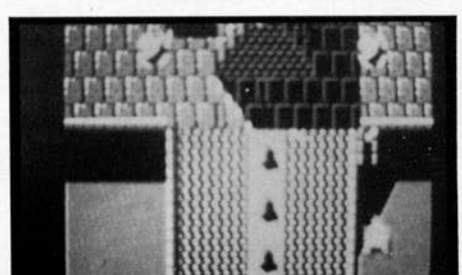


Phantasm



Decisive Battles


Reach For The Stars III


A.L.C.O.N.

STARGLIDER II: This Amiga/Atari ST program picks up where the orginal arcade game left off. The difference is that this one allows the player to perform combat maneuvers in the atmosphere of a planet and soar over alien landscapes. Faster animation teams up with solid three-dimensional graphics to enhance game play in the sequel. Amiga, Atari ST ($44.95). Circle Reader Service Card #17.

Scorpion
19 Harbor Drive
Lake Hopatcong, NJ 07849

PHANTASM: What happens when a destitute, wandering one step ahead of the tax collector, is transplanted into a situation where he can save the world? That's the thesis behind this arcade game where players must choose which of eight regions of the earth to save first. After successfully saving a region, the player can dock and decide on the next section. Amiga, Atari ST ($34.95). Circle Reader Service Card #18.

Strategic Studies Group
P.O. Box 261
Drummoyne 2047 NSW
Australia

DECISIVE BATTLES OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR, VOL. II: GAINES MILL TO CHATTANOOGA: When modified command rules are combined with a proven and venerable game system, players get a challenging strategy game from a command perspective. This is the heritage of SSG games and Decisive Battles II is the latest offering in that tradition. This is certainly an incredibly versatile and formidable game system. Apple II, C-64/128 ($39.95). Circle Reader Service Card #19.

REACH FOR THE STARS: THIRD EDITION: The third edition of this popular space conquest game includes the original scenario plus a new scenario and some new advanced game options. Want to include natural disasters, solar debris or xenophobes in your campaign? Want to allow hidden victory conditions or set up your own task forces? Want to enhance the computer opponent to make it even tougher to beat? The new edition allows you to do this and more. Apple IIGS with 512K, C-64/128, IBM, and Mac ($45.00). Circle Reader Service Card #20.

Taito Software
267 W. Esplanade
North Vancouver, B.C.
Canada V7M 1A5

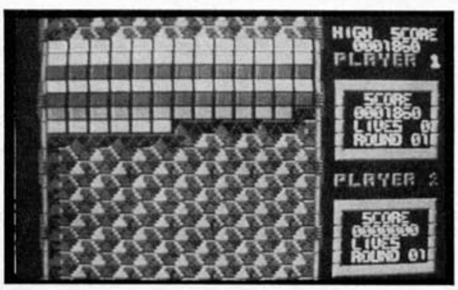
A.L.C.O.N.: Think of a Zaxxon look and feel with more variety in the screens and you get the picture of A.L.C.O.N. Like other Taito games, this one is based off a successful coin-op approach to the subject. Atari ST ($39.95), C-64/128 ($29.95), IBM ($34.95). Circle Reader Service Card #21.

ARKANOID: The fast-paced, multiple screen version of breakout that is incredibly addictive has come to the C-64 with tremendous success. See the review of the Amiga version from discovery games in CGW #44 for more details. Apple II, C-64/128 ($29.95), Atari ST, IBM ($34.95). Circle Reader Service Card #22.

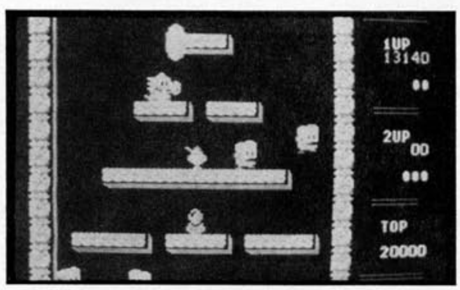
BUBBLE BOBBLE: What do you get for all your trouble, a Bub or a Bob to burst your bubble? Bub and Bob are the heroes in this clever approach to a shoot-'em-up maze chase game. In this game, the players blow bubbles to capture their foes and burst the bubbles to dispose of them. The coin-op version was number one in Europe for more than three months in a row. Apple II, C-64/128 ($34.95), Amiga, Atari ST, IBM ($39.95). Circle Reader Service Card #23.

RASTAN: The hero's sword operates slower than in the coin-op version, but otherwise this conversion seems faithful to the original. This fantasy/action adventure follows a barbarian warrior through a mythical land filled with classic monsters of legend. The object of the game is to face the mighty castle king. C-64/128 ($34.95), Amiga, Atari ST, IBM ($39.95). Circle Reader Service Card #24.

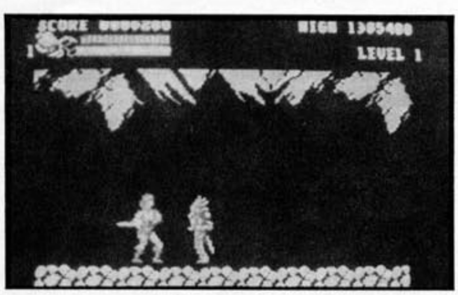
RENEGADE: Another street fighter adventure game, this conversion of the coin-op game allows players to try to be the baddest dude on the streets. You, too, can become a subway avenger in this action game, but you'll have to use your fists and feet to do it. Watch out, the computer opponents know how to gang up on you and they don't fight fair. Apple II, C-64/128 ($34.95), Amiga, Atari ST, IBM ($39.95). Circle Reader Service Card #25.



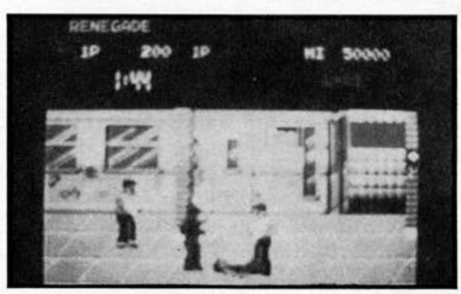
Arkanoid



Bubble Bobble



Rastan



Renegade



Passing In Review

I just renewed my subscription to CGW and there wasn't a bit of doubt in my mind about doing that. I don't read your magazine cover-to-cover, as mentioned by some of your readers, because I have keen interest in specific areas of computer gaming and little or no interest in other segments of the "sport." However, there is a lot of good stuff in each issue that stimulates my anticipation for the next issue. As you very well know from your reader letters, your game critiques are key to game customers. These are my primary source to buy or pass it by . . . and that's the heart of the matter. For example, I'm a baseball fan, but I did not like computer baseball until *Earl Weaver Baseball* reached the marketplace. . . . Your review had the information that made my "buy" decision.

A key reason that the games get better is your reviews. I don't know how much difficulty this gives you in dealing with the game makers (This would make for an interesting article!!!), but . . . my thanks to you.

Paul Varbedian
Cliffside Park, NJ

Lately, you have published letters from a few people who aren't too thrilled with your magazine. Well, I wanted to tell you personally that CGW is far and away the most helpful, honest, and reliable computer magazine available. People are going to have to realize that you are trying to satisfy a very broad range of tastes. I am partial to CRPG's myself, but I enjoy all the articles just the same. CGW is the only magazine I know of that keeps me glued until I've read every word. I just wanted to voice my word of approval and praise for a job consistently well done.

Adam Fleishman
Maplewood, NJ

Ed.: Maybe we ought to move to New Jersey? Actually, the feeling is a little more widespread.

Your game reviews are great! You truly make choosing games easier. I've bought several, mainly because of your reviews.

Robert B. Riddle
Kaiserlauten, Federal Republic of Germany

I've gotten to the point where I won't buy a game I haven't played until you review it. I like articles that do comparisons of similar games.

D. L. Hetsko
Los Angeles, CA

I don't buy a game I haven't read about! Good work!

Bill Boyer
Williamsport, PA

Torpedoing Submarine Mythology

I recently read Mr. Battles' article on **Datasoft**'s *The Hunt for Red October*. Mr. Battles seemed to have mixed emotions about the game and I must agree with him. The game itself has both good and bad points, but it is certainly not the ultimate submarine simulation. In dealing with modern submarine warfare, Datasoft has several misconceptions which keep the game from portraying an accurate representation of present day submarine tactics and combat.

I am currently a submarine ship control specialist for **Rockwell International** in the Washington D.C. office. Before taking this job, I served seven years as a trained nuclear submarine officer. My tours include two years at the Pentagon in the Office of Naval Intelligence and three years as a division officer on board *USS Sturgeon SSN 637* (a nuclear fast attack submarine).

The game itself has several GCE's (gross conceptual errors) which detract from its representation of modern submarine warfare. First, I am not sure where they came up with flack. No submarine (either US or USSR) has a towed noisemaker. Datasoft is most likely thinking of the towed noisemakers that many surface ships use. All submarine countermeasures are expendable, much like chaff or flares from an airplane. This towed noisemaker gives the boat an essentially unlimited noise making capability. In reality, a submarine uses noisemakers only as a last resort and the supply on board is limited.

Although many of the tactics presented in the manual are valid, several GCE's show a lack of understanding about the capabilities of the modern acoustic torpedo and how to defend against it. The manual states that submarines can fire torpedoes at other submarines, but normally, the defending submarine can outrun them. Submarines do not outrun torpedoes, as such. The torpedo is much faster than the boat. You avoid torpedoes by being smarter than they are. The torpedo projects an acoustic cone in front of it which, in turn, detects the submarine. The object is not to be in the cone long enough for the weapon to acquire you. This requires quick maneuvering perpendicular to the axis of the cone. Outrunning implies a race between the boat and the torpedo. This makes a big difference in the tactics you choose.

The manual also recommends running straight at the torpedo to get inside its minimum range. If you are close enough to the other boat to get inside the minimum torpedo range, you have more problems than the torpedo. The way an acoustic torpedo works is by sensing noise from the ship. Believe it or not, the worst thing you can do is head directly at or away from the torpedo. This gives it exactly what it needs to acquire you. A secondary factor is the location of the other submarine. In a close quarters melee with continuously maneuvering boats, you usually do not have a firm idea of where the other boat is. For that reason, a submarine commander would never intentionally close the enemy for fear of collision. You would attempt to open and clear datum to regain your acoustic advantage.

As far as the presentation and mechanics of the game, there are several factors that detract from the realism. For instance, on a real submarine, ESM only gives you a bearing to the enemy radar or communications source (actually, ESM is usually solely associated with detecting radar transmissions). In the game, however, an ESM update gives you distance, as well as bearing. The periscope presentation and operation also leave much to be desired. The periscope view looks more like something from *Tank* than a submarine periscope. It shouldn't have been that difficult to make the periscope, at least, marginally realistic. Its operation further hinders the player. On my IBM version, the scope turns so slowly that it nullifies the advantage of the scope. If you are not already lined up on the target when you raise the scope, you must keep the scope up far too long to get a simple observation. You should be able to raise the scope, find the target, get the observation, and lower the scope in under 15 seconds.

The CGW article on the game also brings up some problems with the game that I agree with. The article, however, makes some misleading points. Mr. Battles states that ". . . you can turn toward the torpedo and let it strike you without incurring damage." Modern torpedoes

do not strike their targets. They inflict damage by exploding near the target. When fired at a surface ship, for instance, the torpedo explodes several feet under the keel; lifting the ship up and breaking the ship's back. If the torpedo does strike the ship in the game, that is another problem with the game.

The article talks about "ESM (Electronic Surveillance Manual)." It is actually *Electronic Surveillance Measures.*" *Mr. Battles goes on to say that the game ". . . seems authentic down to the engine's hum and the 'ping ping' of sonar." This is an example of one of the many things that actually makes the game less authentic. Think about it. Nuclear submarines do not make engine noise. Even a diesel submarine does not make noise when on its batteries. Further, sonar has not made a pinging sound since World War II. The contemporary noise is far from a ping. It is more like a shifting tone.*

The article states that "Naturally, use of ESM or firing a torpedo gives away your position." While it is true that shooting (Submariners never say fire. Fire is hot, makes smoke, and burns things.) a torpedo makes noise, ESM is totally passive and cannot give away your position. It is simply an antenna that you put up to detect radar. It has no active emissions, so it cannot be detected. The mast is visible, however, and can be seen by a passing ship or airplane.

Unlike Mr. Battles, I was actually able to sink ships. The program may have a glitch which keeps the ships from sinking while you are looking at them. I normally take a look, fire my torpedo, and lower the scope. After getting a hit or two, I come back up and can no longer find the ship. Mr. Battles is right, though, in pointing out the larger number of torpedoes you have to fire to get results. It took me three torpedoes to sink the trawler at the start of the game. This is just another point to make about the lack of authenticity of the game (it also bothers me that the crew did not get upset when I sank the trawler and later, an Alpha Class submarine).

Some of the tactics recommended in the article are questionable. The article recommends use of active sonar to detect mines and enemy. This is one of the few points where the game really does parallel reality. Use of active sonar draws unfriendly units right to you. The major axiom of submarines is *never* use active sonar unless you have been counterdetected and have to use it to survive. The only other acceptable time is one pulse just prior to shooting a torpedo to verify the target's range if range is questionable. I feel the reason Mr. Battles is ". . . hitting a line of Soviet ships blocking the pass" is the use of his active sonar. Many of the other recommendations and tactics from the article are good.

Overall, I realize this is just a game and authenticity is often sacrificed for playability. Modern submarine combat, however, is exciting enough that it should be playable, even when it is very authentic. I was disappointed with the game and hope that someone will develop a more realistic modern submarine combat simulation in the near future. I, for one, would be willing to pay the money for it. I feel certain that many other people feel the same way.

Glenn Kenney
Arlington, VA 22202

Ed.: We feel like such a detailed and provocative letter deserves a detailed and well-considered response. The response from Datasoft follows:

I read with interest Mr. Kenney's comments on our software product, *The Hunt for Red October*, in light of his background and knowledge. Mr. Kenney commented, in great detail, on a number of points that he felt would make our software product more realistically simulate the operation of a modern day submarine. While it is true that several aspects of our computer software game may not fully simulate the actual workings of a submarine, one has to remember that our software product was designed to provide home computer enthusiasts with a challenging and enjoyable entertainment experience. I do not believe that any computer software product actually simulates the realistic experiences that one may find on a $100 million aircraft, submarine, helicopter, battleship, or other military vehicle. What we attempt to do with a computer software product is provide a realistic framework from which a computer enthusiast can enjoy the storyline and game play of the product; to immerse themselves in an entertaining, fantasy world where they become the submarine commander of the Red October. In attempting to provide this type of environment, accompanied by full hi-res graphics, sound effects, animation, etc., the memory of a home computer is often insufficient to fully simulate all the workings of a real submarine. Unfortunately, many aspects that would greatly improve the authenticity of a software product are just not possible because of memory limitations. It is a fine balance between what makes a game enjoyable and exciting to play and what elements are essential to convey a sense of realism.

Notwithstanding these points, Mr. Kenney did raise a number of good points that **Datasoft** will definitely attempt to correct or add to the Apple, Apple IIGS, Macintosh, and Atari software versions currently under development. These versions are expected to be released in late September.

I also wanted to comment on several points Mr. Kenney raised in his letter.

1. Mr. Kenney commented that "I am not sure where they came up with flack." Actually, the term flack was used by Tom Clancy in his book, *The Hunt for Red October*, to identify the electronic decoys used to deflect and confuse incoming sonar controlled torpedoes.

Thus, avoiding a direct hit. In Tom Clancy's book, the use of towed noisemakers was also an integral part of the countermeasures used by submarines to avoid torpedo attacks. Again, our software product was based on the storyline taken from Tom Clancy's book and not intended to accurately depict all aspects of a real submarine operation.

2. Another comment made was "The manual states that submarines can fire torpedoes at other submarines, but normally the defending submarines can outrun them." While it is possible for a submarine to avoid a torpedo attack by outrunning the "Fish," the range or distance of the submarine from the attacker has to be sufficiently far enough away to outrun or lose contact with the sonar guidance device of the torpedo. We have since corrected our instructions (on a second printing of the manual) to avoid any misconceptions about this point. Our apology to Mr. Kenney and others who felt this was inaccurate.

3. A third point mentioned by Mr. Kenney was, "The worst thing you can do is head directly at or away from a torpedo." While this may be true, we merely pointed out that "A riskier proposition is to head for the torpedo! This only works if you're within 1000 meters of the launching vessel. A fish doesn't have time to arm itself within that distance. Thus, if you ram it, it won't explode." This point was simply made to point out a tactic, albeit risky, that players may use.

4. A fourth point was that ". . . on a real submarine, ESM only gives you a bearing to the enemy radar or communications source. In the game, however, an ESM update gives you distance as well as bearing." This was an element added to the game that was intended to make the game easier and more exciting to play. Our feeling is that if the features can be enhanced to permit better game play, why not? Adding a distance reading certainly doesn't detract from the game, although it is perhaps less realistic than the real thing.

5. Mr. Kenney's comments about the periscope operation are well taken and are one of the main priorities that we plan to address in the upcoming versions in development.

6. In regard to the sound effects used in the game for the "ping" of the sonar impulse and the engine noises, which Mr. Kenney felt to be unrealistic, we again added these effects for the enjoyment and benefit of the game player. Although they may not be a true simulation of the real sounds on a submarine, if one can improve upon the real thing to enhance the enjoyment of the game play, we feel that is the correct approach.

7. Mr. Kenney commented that "The program may have a glitch which keeps the ships from sinking while you are looking at them." This is certainly not the case. If you are viewing the ship through your periscope and make a direct hit, you will actually see the ship you hit go up in smoke and sink. It merely takes a brief time after a direct hit for this to appear on your computer screen. It may only require one torpedo, at a close range, to sink an enemy ship. However, torpedo hits from a long distance may inflict damage, but not actually sink the enemy ship. The best tactic to sink the enemy ship is to launch your torpedo from close range to guarantee a direct hit that will sink it.

8. A last point on which I wish to comment is Mr. Kenney's comment that the crew did not get upset when he sank the trawler and Alpha Class submarine. In Tom Clancy's book, the Red October successfully defected to the United States Naval Forces without firing a single torpedo. In the software game, to avoid all contacts with enemy ships or mines without any type of combat or interaction would be a major drawback on the game play itself. Again, I only wish to point out that it is important to balance realism with game design and playability. We felt that allowing the Red October to engage in battle without causing a crew mutiny added to the game play.

I wish to thank Mr. Kenney and *Computer Gaming World* for bringing this letter to my attention. I do feel that, perhaps, several of the points he raised, although technically correct, would detract from the game play. Unfortunately, one can not actually simulate modern submarine combat in a software product that encompasses all of the realistic nuances of an actual submarine. The creativity and involvement of the player is crucial to the game play. In that regard, we feel that *The Hunt for Red October* provides an exciting and challenging forum for computer enthusiasts to become the commander of their very own submarine.

Samuel Poole
President of Datasoft
Chatsworth, CA

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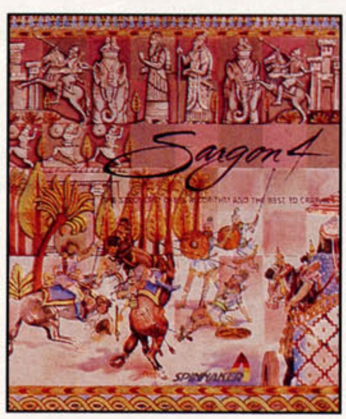


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The Politics of War

*Two games which effectively deal with historical periods of great political consequence were released for the United States' market in June of 1988. Both games come from Japan (***Koei Corporation***) and deal with the unification of countries during a feudal era and both games offer the sophisticated strategy player an opportunity to balance economic, diplomatic, and military decisions during a formative period of a foreign nation. Dave Arneson, best-known as the co-creator of Dungeons & Dragons–, reviews Romance of the Three Kingdoms (Second Century China) and Evan Brooks, CGW's controversial wargame reviewer, considers Nobunaga's Ambition (Sixteenth Century Japan).*



Romance of the Three Kingdoms

by Dave Arneson

What do you mean Lie Yan has defected to Cao Cao? Did I not just give him 20,000 more men and three generals? Now, you say all has been lost! Was it not bad enough that you advised me to marry that wretched Cao Cao's daughter and he demanded an entire province as a gift? My life has become wretched and your advice like the dry wind.

—Last report of Zhang Liao, former advisor to his late Master, Sun Quan, prepared in the year of the Rat for his new Master, Liu Bei.

The Lessons of History

Han emperor general Tung Cho utilized a puppet to rule the lands of China in A.D. 190. With his assassination in A.D. 192, central authority broke down. As a result, provincial governors and generals became autonomous. Then, war broke out between generals Cao Cao and Liu Bei in A.D. 194. So, begins the opening stages of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.

Cao Cao was successful and became *de facto* ruler in 196. He chose to rule through a Han puppet Emperor, but the provinces in the south remained independent. Still, Cao Cao's kingdom stretched across the area north of the Yangtze river.

In A.D. 208, he fought a coalition of southern provinces which led to his defeat at the naval battle at Red Wall. After his death in A.D. 220, Cao Cao's son, Cao Pi deposed the Han emperor in order to found the Wei Dynasty.

Now, there remained two other kingdoms: the Shu in the southwest and the Wu in the southeast. The Shu were established by Liu Bei (who claimed descent from the Han Dynasty). It held its greatest time of strength and prosperity from A.D. 223-234 under Zhu Ge Liang. The Wu Dynasty was founded by Sun Quan. Its greatest influence was around A.D. 250. The strife between these three kingdoms sets the stages for the final scenario in *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.

The Building Blocks of History

The product comes on two game disks and a storage disk. It also includes the invaluable rule book and several handy charts. It is primarily a menu-driven game with a great wealth of rich historical detail.

Its graphics are extremely nice. Even on an amber screen, the graphics show great detail. When most orders are executed, a picture, sometimes animated, appears and portrays the event. These show the nature of the order which has just been given and depicts it quite nicely. Further, each and every one of the sixty-five plus generals has his own picture.

Romance will require some note taking during play. There is a lot of information in this game and a player will find it difficult to recall everything they need to know. The information is available, but looking it up all the time can be quite tedious. Keeping a few notes will save you lots of time.

The player can govern the provinces himself or he can authorize generals to govern provinces. In the fourth scenario, the large kingdoms almost require players to do that. Also, in the first scenario, when things are more

manageable, the player will want to keep control. Actually, authorized governors do a fair job. They concentrate on keeping the peasants happy and developing the land. The power hungry ones will engage in covert actions against your neighbors, though. They will do this whether you want them to or not. Unintelligent governors oppress the peasants and cause revolts. Keep an eye on all the governors through the "Summary of States" menu option during your turn. A good governor needs high intelligence and loyalty. In fact, discerning players will insure that key governors and generals will have high loyalty by giving them regular gifts.

The economic segment of the game is weak. Players can try to make extra gold on the rice market, but it usually not worth the effort involved. A good deal will only net around 250 gold.

The Essence of History Creation

The goal in all of the scenarios is to conquer all of the other provinces. This may be accomplished through war and/or diplomacy. Wars are risky and expensive affairs. With no zones of control, the battle situations can become very fluid.

One of the most important military tactics is the incendiary attack and an unusually potent tactic it is! Fire can force a strong enemy out of a position, no matter how large he is. Even with the expected limitation that a fire in a castle will usually not spread, this game judges that troops in a burning area that do not evacuate that area will be totally destroyed along with their general.

Thus, a good strategy is to seize the weather gauge and set fires that will force the enemy to retreat. Starting a fire is not a 100% certainty, but it is still a high probability based on a general's "Luck" and "Experience" ratings. Fires spread against the wind are, of course, ineffective. Otherwise, a fire can burn in an area for several turns before burning out. New fires can still be started in previously burned areas. All of this strikes me as quite silly and adding very little to the play value of the game.

Here are a few tactics that seem to work more often than not. When one of your generals has a character weakness, keep a close eye on him. He could go off to the opposition in a twinkling of an eye, so do not let him do anything important. Such generals do, however, make good messengers.

Further, guard your rice and your commanding general. Take the most reliable general and make him commander-in-chief (with, at least, 5,000 men in tow). Then, have him sit on top of the rice stocks for the duration of the war. Keep him there even when it looks safe. If the war exceeds one month, the enemy may send in reinforcements. These might appear next to your unguarded rice. Remember, an attacker needs a considerable superiority, both in generals and number of troops, to take out a well-defended province in a single month.

In addition, a balance of arms seems best provided by using a large central force which is well-equipped in combination with one or two lighter armed, but well-trained, forces to be utilized in incendiary raids and general harassment.

The attacker needs to be certain that he has enough generals to occupy each castle. Most castles are next to each other, so a single general's force can "split" and occupy two castles at the same time. Nevertheless, an extra general is useful to cover the rice and any "defections" from your ranks.

Defending a province as a whole is easier. It is far easier to harass the enemy with incendiary attacks, feint at his rice and try to kill their commanding general. Do not hide in a castle, since you can get burned out rather quickly. Learn the "art of harassment" (how the mouse drives the elephant mad) in order to slow down the attacker enough to cause the campaign to go into another month. This, in turn, will cost the enemy rice and give the defender a chance to reinforce. Remember that one of the most destructive covert actions is burning 1/3 of the enemy's rice *per operation*! Thus, even huge stocks of rice can dwindle quickly.



Beyond this, the defender's goal should be to hold the castles. If he can capture the enemy's rice or remove their commander, the attacker is immediately forced to retreat. An attacker must destroy the enemy army or capture all the castles in the province in order to win. Unfortunately, the enemy will rarely sit around waiting to be destroyed. In battle, even a small force can survive one or two rounds of combat with a larger one and this provides enough time to retreat or start a nasty fire.

TITLE:	Romance of the Three Kingdoms
SYSTEMS:	IBM (5 1/4" disks - hard drive okay)
PRICE:	$69.95
# PLAYERS:	0-8
DESIGNER:	Bill Swartz (American Version)
PUBLISHER:	Koei Torrance, CA

The Substance of Diplomacy

This is a game where diplomacy is just as important as fighting battles. Diplomacy must be done in an organized fashion with specific goals in mind. One positive goal is to give presents to neighboring powers and reduce their animosity toward your master to "0." This will cost around 10,000 gold, but will prevent them from attacking you. When animosity is "0," the player should offer a daughter for marriage. If the proposal is accepted, he can ask to receive a province as a wedding gift! The diplomatic activities in *Romance* are a whole game by themselves.

An allied or friendly "master" can be a great "Sugar Daddy." Players can often get loans of rice and gold from "Dad" at no interest. If one has a military alliance, "Dad" will harass your mutual enemy. In fact, the nice thing about this

(Continued on page 31)



CAMPAIGN '88

A Survey of Political Election Games for the Computer

by Wyatt Lee

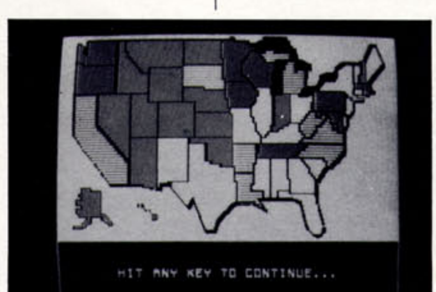
Did the press expose your candidate's speechwriter as the screenwriter for a sleazy soap opera? Did your favorite candidate's opponents charge that his aunt's brother-in-law's cousin was treated for mental illness? Are you down in the dumps because your hopes for a brokered convention were flushed faster than a Watergate plumber's alibi? Are you tired of seeing your candidates lower in the polls than an overweight bassett hound's tummy? Well, then, strike up the band with "Happy Days Are Here Again!" and manage your own presidential or senatorial campaign. You might even learn something while you are stomping those demagogues in that "other party."

What's New, Pres. Elect?

This is the "game" that called the 1984 presidential election "on the nose" three years early as we reported in our very first issue, Volume 1, Number 1, (out of print, but available to anyone with a large enough campaign contribution). Though an earlier feature article charged that the demographics were heavily oriented toward the right (*CGW* 4.4, p. 17), the game is still extremely interesting and playable. In fact, it is even more so in its *President Elect 1988 Edition* incarnation. The roll call of candidates has been increased on both sides of the aisle. The Republicans can now choose Patrick Buchanan, George Deukmejian, Elizabeth Dole, Pierre Dupont, Jeane Kirkpatrick, or Pat Robertson in addition to those in the original game. The Democrats can now choose Bruce Babbitt, Joseph Biden, Dale Bumpers, Henry Cisneros, Mario Cuomo, Michael Dukakis, Dianne Feinstein, Geraldine Ferraro, Richard Gephardt, John Glenn, Albert Gore, Gary Hart, Ernest Hollings, Lee Iacocca, Jesse Jackson, Sam Nunn, Charles Robb, or Paul Simon in addition to the "cloakroom" full of candidates in the earlier version.



TITLE:	President Elect '88
SYSTEMS:	Many
# PLAYERS:	0-3
PRICE:	$24.95
DESIGNER:	Nelson Hernandez, Sr.
PUBLISHER:	Strategic Simulations, Inc. Mountain View, CA



In addition, the allocation of campaign resources as "Political Action Points" rather than "dollars" (which the original game used) meshes better with reality. The PAPs, as the game now refers to them, represent organizational effort and energy, as well as the dispersal of campaign funds. As in the earlier version of the game, play begins by deciding whether to take a foreign trip or not. Veteran players will not have to be reminded that this decision is something of a crap shoot. However, immediately after this decision, the new version of the game allows a candidate to choose the level of his organizational efficiency. This decision underscores the importance of PAPs. However, it seems less than optimal to utilize this option and choose a number below 100. After all, who wants to build less than the "best" campaign organization? The theoretical advantage is that lower campaign overhead frees more funds for campaigning. The disadvantage is that those dollars are not spent as effectively.

Veteran campaigners who have played *President Elect* know that the bulk of decision points in the campaign revolve around the judicious expenditure of PAPs. The first decision of each campaign week is the amount assigned to National Campaigning (televised speeches, promotions, or advertisements with national impact). The documentation recommends that candidates rarely and only under unusual circumstances use fewer than 500 PAPs per week in this portion of the campaign. In reality, it is difficult not to lose ground if one drops below that magic 1000 mark. *[Ed.: We observed the game's designer and publisher play against each other and neither one seemed willing to drop below the 1000 PAP level.]* Note that candidates with a higher personal magnetism glean greater impact from this type of campaigning.

The second decision point of each campaign week is the amount of resources slated for Regional Campaigning (primarily media buys and direct mailings targeted at regional issues). There is a temptation to utilize this strategy every week (because it is there), but the documentation is quite correct that this strategy is most

effective when used in those regions where most of the states are relatively close races. The same point could be made with regard to the third decision point of each campaign week, Individual State Campaigning (rallies, use of local politicians, direct mail on local issues, etc.). This is probably the most expensive type of campaigning, since the manual notes that " . . . 1 PAP used in national campaigning may swing several thousand votes, . . . 1 PAP used in state campaigning may only swing several hundred . . ." (p. 8). Of course, since these are, literally, *swing* votes, this type of campaigning may also be the difference between winning and losing.

Of course, the most interesting part of any campaign has to be the schedule of public appearances. If your candidate has a high personal magnetism and public speaking rating, this portion of the game will be his *forte*. Multiple appearances have a beneficial effect on any given state's vote, but the diminishing returns make appearances beyond three to five of these in a given week seem like mere "whistle stops" which have little impact on the final vote.

Finally, both candidates are given an intelligence report to get an idea of the other candidate's activity during the given week and both candidates are given an opportunity to debate. If both players are human players and have even a slight sense of humor, the debate phase can be very entertaining. As far as the game is concerned, the players will answer anywhere from two to six questions (from a data base of 45 possible questions) by allotting a percentage of time to five different lines of argument. The computer can't hear the human opponents exaggerate their positions and insult the other player as they type in numbers, however. As a campaign strategy, however, players should remember the cardinal rule of American presidential politics: "Never debate when you have a substantial lead." The new version of the game allows up to six debates.

After each campaign week, the computer adjusts the "polls" and draws a map of the United States to reflect the changes. This map, coupled with the election night "boxes" that contain that familiar message, "The computer is projecting the state of _______, " as well as the vote count, make up the "graphic presentations" in the game. As an election night junkie, this happens to be my favorite portion of the game.

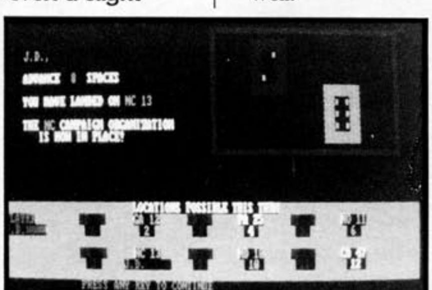


TITLE:	Campaign Promises
SYSTEMS:	IBM
# PLAYERS:	1-6
PRICE:	$39.95
DESIGNER:	Edward and Dina Hayduk Birch and Janine Taylor
PUBLISHER:	Front Runner Software Co. Collinsville, CT

President Elect 1988 Edition is a stimulating, educational, and challenging experience of American presidential politics. If you follow political events with any interest at all, you owe it to yourself to play this game, at least, once.

Promises! Promises!

Even though *CGW*'s "Taking A Peek" on this game called *Campaign Promises* the *Monopoly* of political election games, this product offers more than a parlor game approach. Admittedly, the game is fast-paced (in our experiences, it never took more than an hour and a half to play a game) and more fun than substance, but it teaches some authentic lessons about real politics, as well.



The first lesson is found when play begins. Each player must select three promises from the table of available promises (see chart). Since these promises will have a direct bearing on the number of campaign promise votes to be gained in each state's presidential election, the game teaches that special interest politics are part and parcel of any campaign. That principle seems valid enough, however, it would have engendered more impact if promises like being "Pro Labor" and being "Pro Big Business" had been cross-referenced. As it is now, there is no penalty for making promises out of both sides of a candidate's mouth. Perhaps, though, the game takes a more cynical attitude on this point than the reviewer.

The second lesson to be found relates to building a campaign organization. This is the part that can remind players of *Monopoly*. The various states are color coded according to electoral votes. The "Red" states have 3-8 electoral votes; the "Yellow" states have 9-16 electoral votes; and the big "Blue" states run from 20-47 respectively. In order to organize any or several states, the player must land (by means of a computerized dice roll) on a state coded with the same color as the state he/she wishes to organize. Hence, the dice can rule the early maneuvers of this game as easily as landing on the right property can determine one's future in the popular real estate game.

Table of Promises

1. *Reduce The Deficit*
2. *Improve National Education*
3. *Anti-Abortion*
4. *Protect Environment*
5. *Pro Labor*
6. *Pro Big Business*
7. *Equal Rights*
8. *Minority Rights*
9. *Capital Punishment*
10. *Reduce Trade Imbalance*
11. *Strong Defense*
12. *Raise Social Security*
13. *Deregulate*
14. *Medical Research*
15. *Strong Dollar*
16. *States' Rights*
17. *Desegregation*
18. *Tax Cut*
19. *Anti-Nuclear*
20. *Detente*

What does this teach about presidential politics, though? Well, since campaign organization votes are allotted to the candidate in each state's election on the basis of the number of turns the candidate's organization has been

(Continued on page 36)

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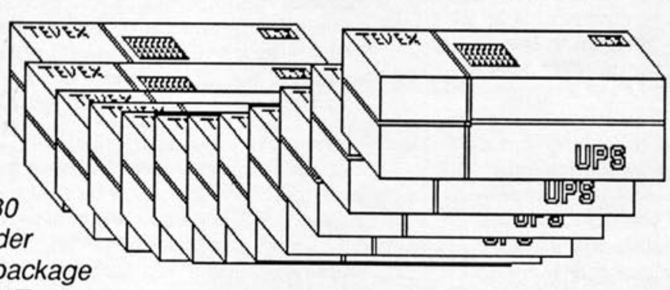
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Baa! Baa! Flak Sheep!

Broderbund's World War II Arcade Game

by William W. David

Your heart pounds in your chest as you rise from the deck of the carrier. You check your weapon systems one last time as you race towards the Japanese island. Suddenly, bullets rip through the cockpit as the shore batteries notice your F6F Hellcat. You quickly silence them with a few well-placed rockets. You feel confident as you move towards the enemy bunkers on the island. Then you notice the pair of Zeros lifting from the airstrip to greet you . . .

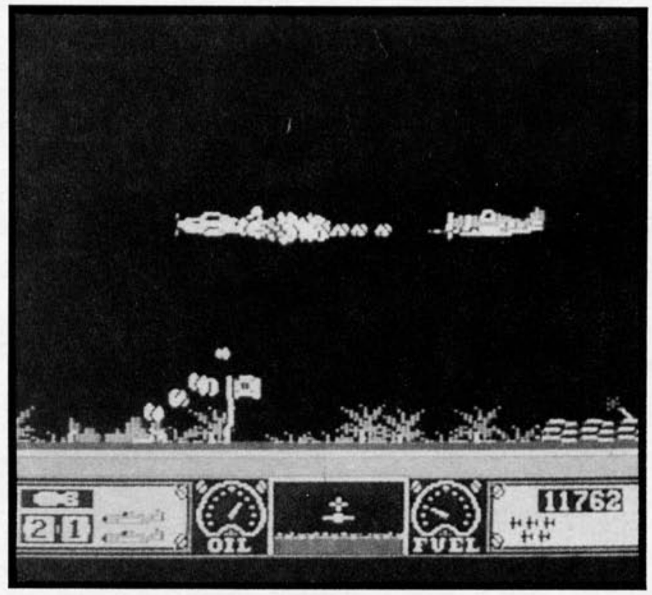


TITLE: Wings of Fury
SYSTEMS: 128k Apple systems
PLAYERS: Solitaire
PRICE: $34.95
DESIGNER: Steve Waldo
PUBLISHER: Broderbund Software
San Rafael, CA

This is the atmosphere created by *Wings of Fury*, the new arcade-style air combat simulator from Broderbund. Players take on the role of an airman in the South Pacific in 1944. Your aircraft carrier, the USS Wasp, has been badly damaged and must limp its way safely back to a distant friendly port. In its way are the forces of the Japanese. At this point in the war, the Japanese have become desperate to maintain control of their remaining territory and they battle ferociously to prevent your passage. The only thing standing between the guns and torpedos of the enemy and the lives of the crew of the Wasp is one lone combat-worthy airplane.

What an airplane, though! It is the mighty F6F Hellcat, a real work horse. Capable of bearing an impressive arsenal of bombs, rockets, and torpedos, it is able to lay waste to any ship or ground emplacement and is more than a match for anything that the enemy can put into the air.

The enemy comes in several forms. First of all, there are the islands which contain bunkers, machine gun emplacements, shore batteries, airstrips, and of course, Japanese soldiers. Next, come the ships which range from the lowly cruiser to the powerful aircraft carrier. There are also Japanese fighter planes ("Zeros") which come after you and torpedo planes that attempt to sink your ship.



The instructions provided with the game are simple, well-written, and refreshingly brief. It doesn't take hours of pouring over obscure charts to get started in this game.

The entire game is played using the joystick. The controls are easy to use and are learned very quickly. The moves executed on screen correspond very well with the users hand movements, making for a highly responsive game.

The graphics are some of the best action graphics pulled out of the Apple in recent memory. They are, quite simply, stunning. The attention paid to graphic detail turns this game into a truly outstanding experience. The puffs of smoke, the enemy troops running for cover, the signalmen on the carrier, and the deck pitching with the roll of the waves are all memorable visuals. *[Ed.: Memorable is right. We remember some of these graphic routines from their original manifestation in Broderbund's mega-hit, "Choplifter!"]* The sound effects leave a little to be desired, but not much. One thing that stands out in this area is the crackling sound of fire in the bombed-out ruins, a nice touch.

The game also has a nice difficulty curve. The novice does not die so quickly as to become frustrated and scores are able to show a consistently steady improvement. This is not to say that *Wings of Fury* is easy, however. While the expert can indeed clear the first screens with ease, the upper levels continue to offer a challenge.

Despite the setting, this is not a wargame or a flight simulator by any stretch of the imagination. It is, however, an exciting action arcade-style game that tests the reflexes of the most demanding gamer. Beyond this, Wings of Fury does a good job of creating a feeling of the spirit of flight. It is more than just a mere combat game. It has a feeling of depth that is missing in many other current offerings.

Bottom line: This is an exciting, memorable game for anyone remotely interested in action games. Broderbund should have a hit with this one. It is worth your while to check it out.



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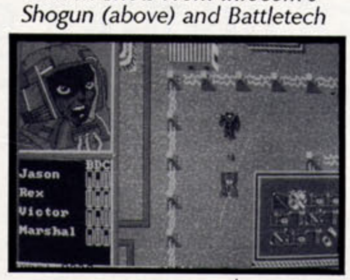
THE RUMOR BAG

by Sergei Petrovich Romanov Kosygin





Screen Shots From Infocom's Shogun (above) and Battletech



No *maskirovka*! I would tell the same to the KGB. I was simply on vacation in Chicago and happened to end up at the Art Institute. I was not looking for secrets or expecting to find any. I was camped out in the gallery where the paintings by Monet are displayed and found myself walking by one of Rodin's sculptures. The statue's face was contorted in a look of agonizing pain and I was just drifting into a meditation on the human condition when I overheard an incongruous chuckle in the background. Glancing out of my peripheral vision, I noticed a lovely lady giggling to her bearded escort. "It looks like a gamer who just ran into the 'Umanu' in *Starflight II*!"

Now, I hadn't actually heard anything about *Starflight II* before, so I followed the couple from Monet to Monet in order to get the information. It seems that the sequel to the popular space game will support EGA and offer a whole slew of bizarre new races. The actual events in the sequel take place thirty years after the previous game ended. Players can bring over their crew and ship from the first game, as well as a few artifacts from the initial adventure.

The sequel is based on a barter economy; offers a deadlier race than the Uhlik; reveals the story behind the Uhlik of the original story; and provides just enough time travel to keep players off balance.

The young couple moved through the gallery at a faster pace than I prefer, but stopped quickly in front of a sculpted monkey. The monkey was dancing as though for an organ grinder and had the most eloquent expression of disgust on his face. The couple laughed loudly at this *objet d'art*. "I haven't seen an expression like that," observed the masculine partner in the duo, "since we started working on *Caveman Ughlympics*." My hand slid quickly to my notebook. I had heard rumors about **Electronic Arts**' upcoming product where these comic Neanderthals are competing in such events as the "Mate Toss" and other zany events. I had even heard that designers at **EA**'s recent *Artist Symposium* were vociferous in their enthusiasm with regard to the game. Now, I was hearing that the product should be in the stores by October.

Not wanting to be found out as the eavesdropper I was, I wandered back toward the portion of the gallery that houses the paintings by Renoir and Van Gogh. On the way, I entered a room dominated by a wall-sized Seurat. A lecturer at the institute was demonstrating how Seurat would shuffle up to his canvas, strategically place one dot, and return to view the entire painting from a distance. Warped mind that I am, the lecturer's shuffle reminded me of skating and skating reminded me of hockey back in the motherland. I thought about some information I received about a product under development by **Bethesda Softworks**, the people who designed *Gridiron!*. Now, they've taken the expertise of Doug Carpenter, coach of the *Washington Capitols* and Brian and Terry Murray of the *Caps*, as well as Bobby Orr of *Boston Bruins* fame and put that expertise to work in *Slapshot!*. The *Washington Capitols* actually allowed the designers to tape a special practice in order to get the digitized sounds right. Like their previous sports simulation, this is expected to blend statistics, physics, and real-time action into a fast-paced game. Unfortunately, our great Red Army team is not in the game. I guess it would have unbalanced the game in favor of my countrymen. You *do* know that we Russians invented hockey, don't you?

I passed by some dark hallways to return to the gallery of impressionists, imagining how many secret policemen could be hidden in their shadows. Those thoughts of distant lands reminded me of how many games with oriental themes were waiting on our western horizons. **Infocom** just announced their licensed product based on James Clavell's *Shogun*. Dave Lebling is the designer of this game where players take on the role of Blackthorne. The graphics (I confess, comrades, I did say, "Graphics") are imitative of traditional 16th Century Japanese style. They are used as both illustrations and text borders, since the game is still primarily interactive fiction.

Origin Systems is busily working on *Moebius II*. This adventure is set in the Orient and offers much more authenticity than the original game. A tremendous amount of research went into gleaning art ideas from ancient Chinese and Japanese scrolls, as well as incorporating primarily Chinese legends (with a mixture of some Japanese folklore). The game will offer a greater depth to characters (particularly, non-player characters) than its progenitor. Those who didn't like killing for the food and water so precious in the original adventure will be pleased to note that it is *not* as significant a factor in the sequel. In fact, there is no killing in *Moebius II*, since opponents will flee rather than fight to the death.

Also, **Koei** is planning to release *Genghis Khan* prior to the end of the year. The game reportedly has a similar interface to the games covered in this issue, prettier graphics, and more challenging game play. There is also a new, "quick resolution mode" to resolve those battles where one or the other side is grossly outnumbered. Since the name of these games is history and the opportunity to remake it, this game offers the chance for those who conquer Asia to move on to Europe. It is even possible to run into Richard III in this game. This may, indeed, be a "winter of discontent" for many a computer "Richard."

I must have been talking aloud, because these two fellows who looked suspiciously like KGB were following me. Of course, it might have been someone who was trying to steal game ideas. I reversed direction and tried to lose them in a special exhibit on "Arms and Armor." Naturally, these were medieval arms and armor, but one fellow was pontificating rather effectively on the relationship of personal armor to armored

vehicles. I'm not sure I followed his argument, but I did catch the point that he had been researching the use of armored vehicles for some **Simulations Canada** games. It seems they are starting a series of tactical armor games (nine in all) under the general title of *Battletank*. Due in December or January, this is an approach to armor which will use the doctrinal concept utilized in other SimCan games. It is even possible that SimCan will use a graphic replay (Yes, comrades, I did say "Graphic.") to give an "after battle" report when they publish *Battletank* on the 16 bit machines. I also heard that the company is planning to publish several naval games: *Northern Fleet* (modern naval combat in the North Atlantic); *Grand Fleet* (tactical naval combat during World War I); and *Jutland Campaign* (strategic naval combat during World War I).

Speaking of armor, my loquacious source wasn't anywhere near finished. He alleged that there were even futuristic tank games in the near future. **Origin Systems** plans to release a game with the working title, *Cybertank*. In this strategy game, players will design their own fighting machines using a "pull-down menu" interface. Ideally, if players tire of the library modules of sample tanks and opponents, they can download opponents from various bulletin boards that will provide support for the game. It looks similar, but superior, to the *Robotwar* game from now defunct **Muse Software**.

Another variation, my source went on, is the first *BattleTech* adventure from **Infocom**. Although the game will offer the most locations of any role-playing game to date (the company claims over four million locations), the battles to be fought will require skill enhancement through weaponry and intelligence, hardware upgrades, and tactical combat skills. Each adventurer must learn to operate his BattleMech, a thirty-foot tall combat robot, in order to stave off an alien invasion. If you enjoy "Japanimation," you will probably enjoy the look and feel of this game.

Some clown in the gallery had the nerve to hush my source and I thought seriously about using one of those halberds on display to get rid of this unwanted heckler. Fortunately, I realized that the halberd would be an ideal weapon in **Infocom**'s new *Journey* game and my mind wandered onto other thought patterns. This classic fantasy adventure will utilize both graphics and be menu-driven. The company is suggesting that the game will introduce a new genre which they are calling "role play chronicles."

The good folks at the institute were getting ready to close the gallery, so I had to exit out the main entrance. That wouldn't have been bad, except that I had to pass right by those two foreign fellows I had been dodging earlier. As I walked by, I heard the tell-tale sounds of words like *Frobozz, Double Fanucci, Peggleboz,* and *Megaboz*. Whew! Those comrades weren't Soviets. They were Steve Meretzky fans warming up for *Zork Zero* the hilarious (and graphic) prequel to the *Zork* series which features a mouse interface. The brutes accosted me, put a *Leather Goddesses of Phobos* tee-shirt on my torso, and threatened to put me to work in a granola mine in Antharia if I revealed anything about the new **Infocom** games. Little did I realize . . . *[Ed.: Make certain that the art department removes the milk and cereal stain from the bottom of this page.]*

Non-Resident President

by David M. Wilson

The President of the United States has been kidnapped. He won't be lonely, though. The terrorists were kind enough to abduct all of the other heads of states attending the "top secret" summit. Now, a global search is being made for the world leaders. The player's skill will determine whether they find him in time or not.



TITLE:	The President Is Missing
SYSTEMS:	C-64/128, IBM
# PLAYERS:	Solitaire
PRICE:	$24.95
DESIGNER:	Paul Norman
PUBLISHER:	Cosmi Corporation Wilmington, CA

The game, an interactive graphic adventure simulation, is set in June, 1996 (so those who dislike the current administration should not get too excited). The player is assigned as a Special Investigator by the Vice-President and empowered with access to federal databases. Reports of federal agencies, official government documents, public and private records, files of intelligence organizations, and cooperation of related investigating agencies are all available to the player. Sounds simple, right? Well, it is not simple! There are so many files to go through and so many clues that most players will not know where to start. As a matter of fact, the complexity of the game may be a shortcoming.

The mechanics of the game are simple enough, though. Players can access a files menu and begin reading subject files on everyone from Irish terrorists to the Vice-President. Finding the right clue in those files is the trick. The files menu also access top secret documents, reports, photographic files, records, and personal case files.

The files are most impressive, graphics-wise. Each subject file has a realistic-looking computer-generated photo display. The photographic evidence files are also quite authentic looking.

The game comes with a dramatized audio tape which contained clues. Players must listen carefully and repeatedly to the tape. *Hint:* Listen to the President and First Lady carefully, a different wording provides a large clue.

The tape also contains a portion of a Morse code transmission received in the Mediterranean Ocean. The recording of this segment is extremely irritating to listen to because it has the sound effects of a storm and an overload of radio static. By typing in *Codes* on the request screen, players are able to bring up a code deciphering tool for Morse code and enigma code messages. Players can also send the encrypted message to Langley to be decoded by "The Company." The code screen can be used to learn Morse code, as well, if a player is so inclined.

The Special Investigator has eight agents assigned to him for investigatory purposes. Wise players will utilize these agents to the fullest degree by sending them to check out *everybody*. The game is slowed considerably, however, when the S.I. must wait for the agents to report in. The game has programmed in real time "dead time," but those who have played *Def Con 5* and *Chernobyl* will not be surprised at this approach since Norman used real time "dead time" in those computer-computer simulations, as well.

It is *very important* that players make certain that all assigned agents report in prior to shutting down the terminal. If you "log off" the game before you have received the reports, agents will "forget" that they are on assignment and the entire process must be approached again when play is resumed.

Players may find themselves confused by the mislabeling of the two double-sided floppy disks. The program refers to disks 1-4, while the disks are labeled Disk One, Side One and Disk One, Side Two, as well as Disk Two, Side One and Disk Two, Side Two. It seems like a minor matter, but I finally took a magic marker and wrote 3 and 4 on the appropriate sides of Disk Two. This oversight can be irritating.

Even though the player is allegedly given clearance for all documents, access to two documents is repeatedly denied. Players should continue typing in numbers until they break the code for these documents. They are vital to solving the mystery. This seemed unrealistic, since the program gave the player as many tries as necessary to break the code. Later, the program even changed one of the codes that I had written down.

The President Is Missing is a game that starts out with an exciting premise, an interesting plot, and well-planned graphics, but ends up as a poorly executed program. The game will simply prove not to be worth the trouble to most players. Extremely experienced players who enjoy tough games might be delighted by the potential challenge, but the game has simply too much dead-time to be truly exciting or for players to maintain their initial enthusiasm.

GLOBAL COMMANDER

by M. Evan Brooks

Global Commander (GC) is a simulation in which the player administers global security through various options (e.g. SDI, military force, electronic eavesdropping) in the year 2032. Successful performance leads to comfortable retirement. Failure yields early termination or the unwelcome experience of watching the world become a radioactive cinder.

Written in a semi-humorous context, the documentation delineates the various options. However, victory conditions are omitted (with each turn being one week, success is dependent on surviving at an average rating or above for one full year).

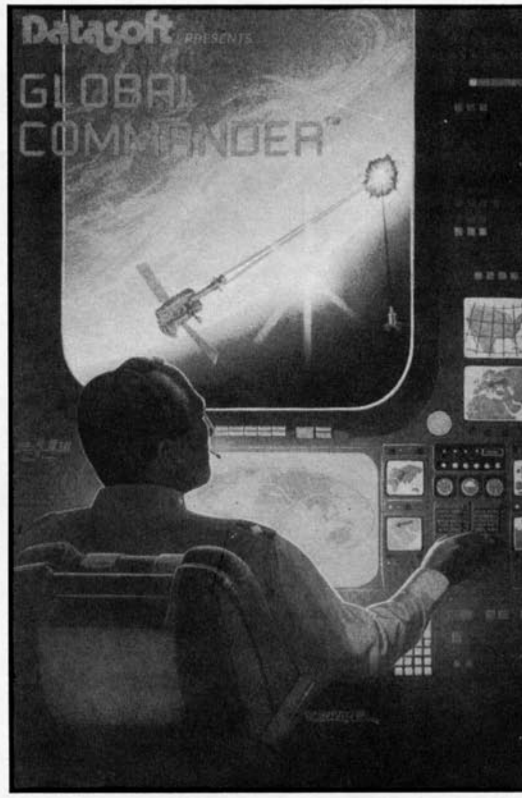
A separate map and flag counters are included as a physical graphic aid to show current attitudes between the various member nations of the UNN (United Nuclear Nations). Given the "real-time" speed of the game and the awkwardness of monitoring the various computer inputs plus the map, the latter quickly becomes an exercise in futility.

As Global Commander, the player must preserve world peace (or minimize conflict). Five game functions (represented by icons) are available to assist in this task. The first icon represents satellites. Six laser defense satellites are available for placement in order to intercept nuclear missiles. In addition, three reconnaissance satellites are useful for checking on member nations' compliance with nuclear stockpiles. The second icon offers information. Various reports show missile stockpiles, natural resources, and technological capability. Generally, one should strive to equalize natural resources and technological capabilities. A third icon is used to command the UNN Force. In the game, the player's troops can be committed to a member nation as a security force (useful for keeping a lid on trouble, except that too long a stay can generate bad feelings by the indigenous personnel). A fourth icon functions as the ubiquitous "In/Out Tray" possessed by any busy executive. Players can receive messages from member nations seeking assistance or attempting to clarify a policy; provide redistribution of assets; commend/criticize member nations; and direct nations to improve their relationships. The fifth icon represents the use of short-wave radio. Here, players may intercept member nations' signals in order to determine what may be happening behind the scenes.

Radio intercept may be accomplished in two fashions: frequency select (time-consuming, but reliable) or frequency scan (quick, but intercepts must be decoded). This reviewer recommends the latter; even if the intercept can only be partially decoded, sufficient data will be recovered for action. The slower frequency select simply requires too much time with too much else happening.

Initial responses must be geared to equalize natural and technological assets among the sixteen member nations. Attempt to totally equalize the world; it will take time, but in the long run, it is a safer path to world peace.

Disarmament directives are generally ignored unless the receiving nation has the honor of hosting the UNN Security Forces. Therefore, don't waste time on disarmament unless positive results are being achieved. Victory lies in maintaining peace and not securing universal disarmament.



Central America and Libya are the paranoics of the world. While Central America can be placated, Libya seems to respect military force. Therefore, stationing the security force in Libya becomes virtually mandatory; their transfer elsewhere generally will trigger at least a conventional war by the Libyan fanatics. Also, Canada, the European United Eastern Europe *and* the United States generally cheat on missile sites. Watch them by satellite!

TITLE:	GLOBAL COMMANDER
SYSTEMS:	C-64/128
PLAYERS:	1
PRICE:	$19.95
DESIGNER:	J. Wilson, D. Martin B. Notarianni, & R. France
PUBLISHER:	DataSoft Chatsworth, CA

GC has a very nice musical background accompaniment. For the first five minutes, it is enjoyable. Thereafter, it becomes tedious. No toggle-off switch exists; the only way to turn the music off is to lower the volume on one's monitor.

The game may be saved only in RAM; no disk save option has been included. While this does allow one to ignore a devastating week, the length of the game and lack of a disk save was sorely missed, although **DataSoft** maintains that a complete game may be completed in two (2) hours.



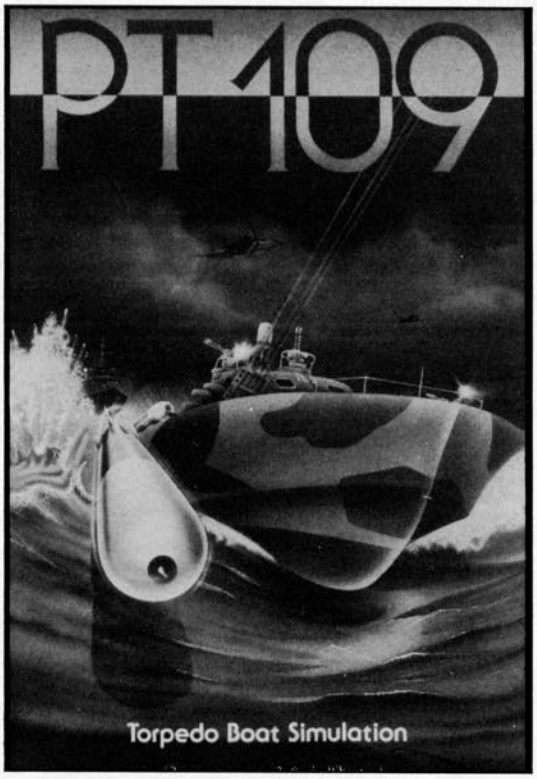
Global Commander is an inexpensive game of diplomacy and strategic initiative. Currently available for the C-64/128, it is being converted for the IBM/ST/Amiga. However, the 16-bit price will increase to $39.95. DataSoft notes that the 16-bit version will have improved graphics, game play and save options. This would be useful. The game can be entertaining, but overall, the inconveniences may outweigh the advantages.

PT-109

Spectrum Holobyte's Torpedo Boat Simulation

by Bob Proctor

The night is warm and very dark. You are patrolling the waters around New Georgia in your PT boat, hoping to interfere with any Japanese barge traffic that shows up. It's been dull so far and the dull thrum of the engines is making you drowsy. It's almost 2:30 AM! Suddenly, a sighting report races through the boat like a spark! There's something out there, just a little to the left as you look out over the bow. You raise your binoculars but it's still too far—maybe 7 or 8 miles—to see anything but a black lump, just slightly darker than the star-filled sky.



NAME:	PT-109
SYSTEMS:	Mac
PRICE: $49.95	
# PLAYERS:	1
DESIGNERS:	Digital Illusions, Sean Hill, and Mark Johnson
PUBLISHER: Alameda, CA	Spectrum HoloByte

After hours of boredom, the chance for action is like a cold shower. You speed up to close the target and steer toward it. The range begins to dwindle. Watching through your night glasses, you strain to make out details. Yes! There are definitely tall masts, this is something more than barges! Down to 3 miles now, the silhouette that emerges is tall and complex. Can it be the pagoda mast and funnels of a heavy cruiser? You allow yourself to hope. You remember that night off Guadalcanal when you got in under the guns and put 4 fish into the side of a heavy. The big ship actually made an easier kill than smaller destroyers and escorts. Throttle back to reduce the noise and wake, stealth is your best chance to get in close.

Two miles now, almost into the range of your guns. There's still something funny about this cruiser,it seems to have one too many masts. Just as the sickening realization hits—you've been fooled by overlapping silhouettes—the two destroyers turn toward you and begin firing! You also realize, somewhat belatedly, that your desire to add 11,000 more tons of shipping to your record has kept you from assessing the risk to the boat and crew. Now you face almost hopeless odds.

Suddenly, time seems to slow down, you are completely calm. You got them here, it's up to you to get them out! First launch all four torpedoes, you have to get rid of them anyway to lighten the boat enough to outrun destroyers. May as well shoot them toward the enemy. Now, full throttle and right full rudder! The idea is to put them dead astern and start the smoke generator! With only a 3 knot advantage in speed, it will take you over an hour to get out of range. Can you possibly last that long without taking a hit? Your boat is only plywood, a hit anywhere, even a near miss, will probably slow you down enough to seal your fate. Better radio your base, too. At least,they'll know your approximate position and that may mean the difference between being picked up and becoming an MIA.

Salvo after salvo explodes around you, sending up geysers of water. Suddenly, an explosion lights up the sky behind you—one of your torpedoes has found a target! One of the enemy destroyers drops rapidly astern. The other continues to give chase for a bit, but then, turns away to help its sister ship. You've made it! You return to base in the bright dawn light. You have no sinkings to show for your long night, but you feel, deep inside, a sense of belonging. You're one of the elite, a Devil Boat skipper!

Stand By to Cast Off

If the story above seems to describe the kind of computer simulation you'd *like* to play (but don't really expect, at least, with the current generation of computers), I have good news.

With *PT-109*, it is possible to experience action like that—in fact I was describing an actual scenario of my own. Of course, there has to be some "willing suspension of disbelief;" it won't seem quite the same if you keep reminding yourself that you are sitting in front of a computer and your hand holds a mouse instead of a wheel.

Still the game can provide *every* element and thrill that I described and is therefore a remarkable accomplishment. However, don't stop reading before you run off to buy PT-109; I have some advice that will help you achieve a sense of "being there."

PT-109 is strongly reminiscent of *GATO*. It is much more realistic, but this in no way detracts from playability. There is a strong emphasis on graphics and sound and the view "from the deck" has improved, featuring more realistic ships and a greater variety of weather and lighting. The way the targets appear as small blobs and grow into identifiable targets is great, I don't expect to see better until games are designed for 2 megabytes of memory. And, of course, you can use the binoculars for a magnified view. There are 12 different types of enemy ships you might see, from the heavy cruiser down to fishing boats even smaller than your PT, and there are airplanes that can swoop down out of nowhere!

Away All Boats!

The basic patrol structure of GATO remains, only now a patrol (usually) takes place in a single night, not over days or weeks.

You leave your base after dark with orders to follow a route at specific speeds. If nothing eventful happens, this route would bring you back to base around dawn. Don't worry, though, there is not a single uneventful patrol in this game! Your route is shown on the map, which depicts a real area of the Pacific and Med, not some hypothetical grid of islands. In general, you will view the map on the screen and use "rapid deployment" to speed up time until you get to a combat situation. At this point you go to the cockpit view and the timescale reverts to normal.

If you chose to play a single patrol, you select the time and place from five choices: the Loss of the Phillipines in early'42, Guadalcanal in late '42 and early '43, New Guinea or the Mediterranean in late'43 or early '44, and the Return to the Phillipines in late '44. There are 45 patrols in total, 10 from each locale except the last which has but 5.

To make things more interesting, a campaign game has been added. If you play a complete campaign, you will always begin at the beginning of the war and play through the finish for a total of 35 patrols. In late 1943, you get a choice of doing either the 10 New Guinea patrols or the 10 patrols in the Med. A skipper that completes at least 10 patrols in a campaign is eligible for the Top Skippers list, assuming the score (tons of shipping sunk) is high enough. Campaigns make for more fun, not because of the scoring, but because they add suspense by making survival so much more important.

Full Speed Astern

The *bad* news is that I don't play PT-109 any more because I've used it up. All patrols in PT-109 are preprogrammed and I've played all of them 2 or 3 times, some of them 5 or 6. A single campaign game uses 35 of the 45 possible. Once I recognize a particular scenario, I know what kind of ships (and planes) will appear and where. I'm not likely to mistake 2 destroyers for a cruiser and I'm not likely to waste 4 torpedoes on a freighter if I know a tanker will show up later. Somehow, without the element of surprise, the game just doesn't seem as much fun.

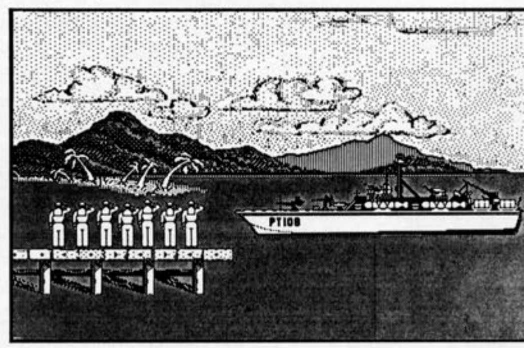
So, you have some choices to make. You can play this like an arcade game if you want and have a lot of fun for a little while. I call this the "can of beer" approach where you just chug-a-lug and go on to something else. An alternative is to approach it more like a fine wine, determined to savor every last drop. It is for those of you who chose the latter approach that I offer the following advice.

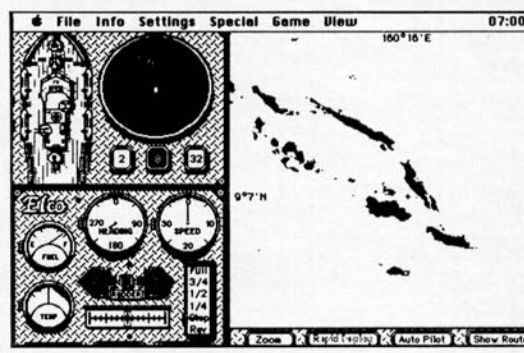
If you really want to get the *most* from this game, don't just jump in and play lots of the patrols at level one. That level is designed for novices and makes life much easier. It's easier to get hits on the enemy and, at the same time, harder for them to hit you. Even if they do get a hit, damage is less severe and more quickly repaired. Enemy ships and planes show up on the map view which turns it into super-radar that reveals the whole picture. Yes, you'll have fun learning the game at level one, but when you're ready for a challenge, a lot of the patrols will already be familiar to you.

Fortunately, there is an alternative. There is a practice mode that will give you training with your boat and weapons. Use it! Get comfortable with your boat's capabilities, then go directly to level four (the highest) and start a campaign game. Trust me! You wanted as much realism as possible, didn't you? Level four is *not* all that much harder than level one. You can still sink escorts with your guns alone! It *does* turn off your super-radar so that there are some surprises left in the world and keeps you from being almost invulnerable. At level one, you need not fear a pair of destroyers. At level four, discretion is advised.

Green Dragons Forever

Your basic PT boat stayed pretty much the same throughout the war and the boat you command has realistic speed, range and armor (if you can call plywood "armor," that is). Your weaponry matches the period of your patrol. Early in '42 you get only 4 torpedoes and a light machine gun, but by 1945, you have 50 caliber MG's, 40mm cannons, depth charges, and even a rocket launcher! Novice levels of play allow you to use the more powerful weapons at any time.





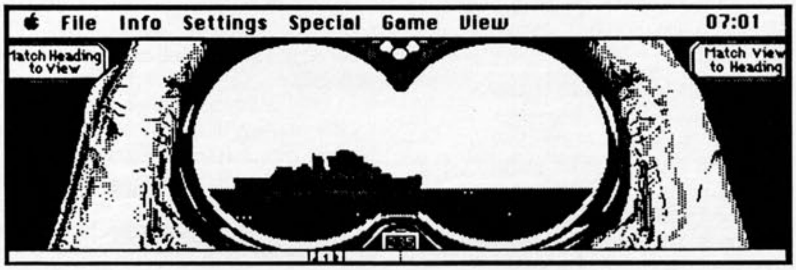
All boats have the same radar set no matter what period you choose. Radar was not common on PT boats until late 1943 and was always somewhat unreliable. In PT-109, you get 100% reliable radar that sees *everything* out to 32 miles. My advice to purists is, don't use the 32 mile setting for scenarios during 1942. Used at the 8 mile setting, it sees just about what the crew could see with their normal vision and you can pretend that you have an ever-alert crew instead of a top-secret radar set.

The funny thing is, the game *could* have done away with the radar entirely for these early scenarios because of the excellent digitized sound. There are the sounds of gunfire and explosions, of course, but at several points during the game your crew talks to you. If your radar is knocked out by battle damage, you will still know when a ship comes within sight because you'll hear a klaxon and "All hands to battle stations".

There several other areas where I think the game lacks realism. They do *not* detract from the fun and I don't intend these comments as criticism of PT-109, which strikes a nice balance between fun and history. I

mention them for those readers that are interested in extreme realism and want to know whether this game will satisfy them.

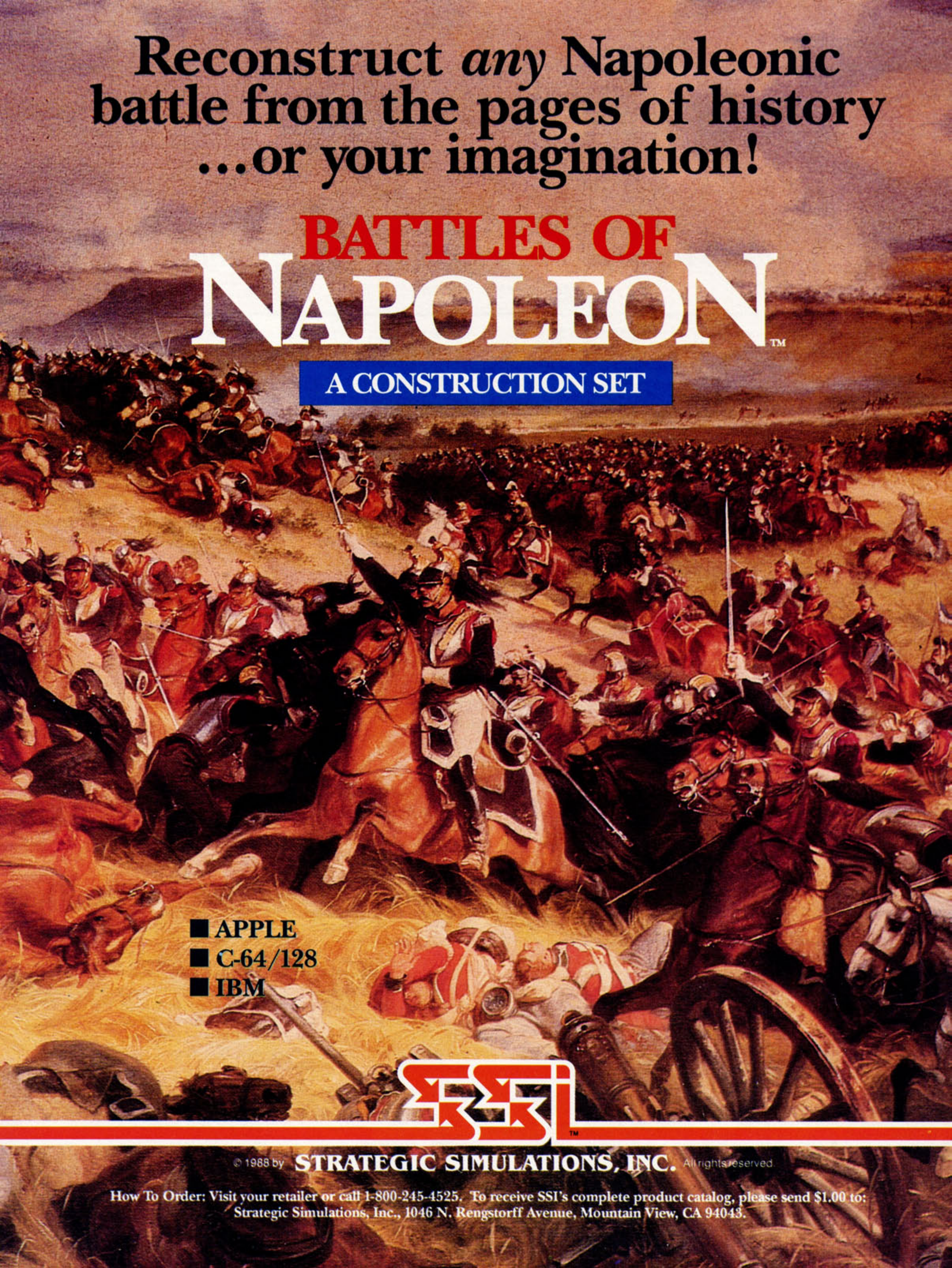
Firstly, combat results. Even at the highest level of difficulty, this PT packs a wallop! It *never* misses a zero that flies within range. It has no trouble at all winning gunnery duels with armed escorts or 6000 ton freighters with deck guns. It makes for fun, at first, but after a while, it takes a really big fleet to intimidate you. On the other hand, in the Solomons campaign, the Japanese used groups of destroyers to run supplies "down the Slot" at night. These ships were short of crew and so heavily loaded that they could not fight well. In PT-109, all DD's that you encounter in the Slot will be the Emperor's finest. So, be careful! These are the scenarios I go back to—it takes skill to pick off one DD out of a group of 4 or 5 and get away safely!



The next point has to do with the overall feel. PT boats rarely were given orders to follow specific courses at specific speeds. PT-109 just doesn't give you, as skipper, the initiative that you should have to patrol where you want and to try to find where and when the supplies are moving. I also wish there were more than three outcomes (your commanding officer rates you on a scale of try harder, successful, and outstanding) to a patrol. Once again, the constraints of the real world put limits on our simulations. PT-109 is not a game of PT boat patrolling, it is a game of PT boat *combat*. The whole patrol structure is just a way to give a more realistic background to the combat situations. There are some types of combat that I would have liked to have seen included. For example, attacks against shore installations were pretty common for PT boats and I was very disappointed that none of the "Return to the Phillipines" patrols dealt with the Battle of Surigao Strait (where PT's got to ambush battleships!).

Mission Well Done!

So, there you have it. **Spectrum Holobyte** has another game with superb graphics and sound in their line. It has enough realism for most and uses the Mac interface to make a complex simulation very easy to play. Just remember not to rush into it.

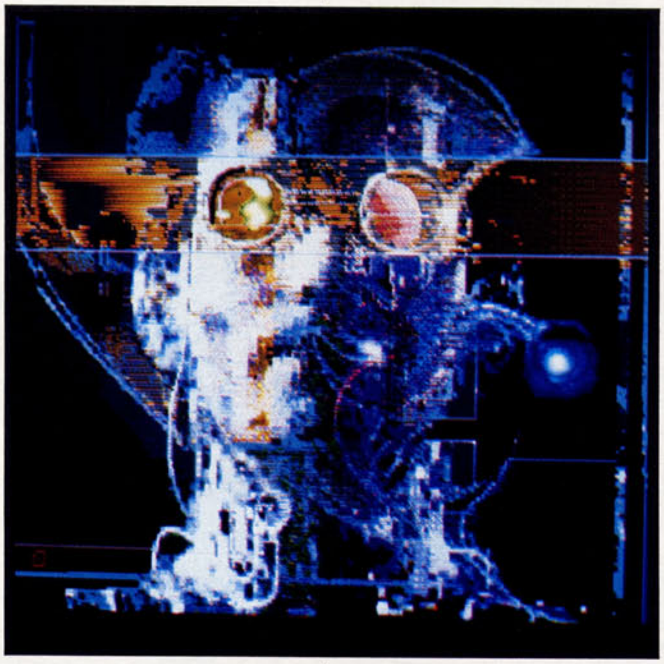

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Console Cowboy

A Sneak Preview of Interplay's "Neuromancer"

by Johnny L. Wilson

You wake up to the tune of Ratz' prosthetic arm as he wipes the bar with a dirty rag. You realize that you are up to your nose in a plate full of synthspaghetti and it isn't even as healthy as those amitriptyline tabs you're usually popping to counter your depression. You used to be the best console cowboy in the business, but that was before you doublecrossed the wrong people. They pumped you full of that secret Russian mycotoxin and damaged your nervous system enough to make sure you would never work again.



Now, this fellow Armitage is offering you a job with a 10,000 New Yen advance. The job must be big, but you want to check up on the guy before you do anything. You use the advance to get your "deck" out of hock and start to check out the various bulletin boards (dataspaces) which are available. Using the "boards," you manage to pay your overdue bill at the Cheap Hotel, download more powerful software, and discover what is happening in Chiba City. Later, you can find the back doors to each dataspace, use your Cryptology chip (which jacks right into a silicon socket in your head) to break the code on the passwords, and make some extra cash.

That is the premise of *Neuromancer*, an adventure game based on the Hugo and Nebula award-winning novel. The game uses the environment, characters, technology, and basic plotline of the novel, but the plot has been changed enough that even those who have read the novel will have plenty of surprises. **Commodore 64/128** owners will get the first opportunity to play the game, but **Amiga** owners should get an enhanced version before the game goes too far.

Cyberfunk and Cyberpunk

The game begins with a splash screen and a soundtrack taken from DEVO's *Total Devo* album, "Some Things Never Change." Somehow, the song seems appropriate for the cyberpunk mythos this game utilizes. After this, the player's character wakes up in Ratz' bar. The upper two-thirds of the screen is taken up by the animated figure which represents the character and the location where the action is currently taking place. The lower third of the screen has eight icons on the left side of the screen. These are command options which may be accessed by a joystick-driven pointer. However, it is possible to maneuver the player via the keyboard and access the command options via command keys, as well. One option enables the player to toggle through various types of information (including amount of money on credit chip, exact time, date, and physical constitution); take an inventory, operate a PAX machine (sort of a master electronic information, mail, and banking service); initiate a conversation with an NPC; access any skills which have been acquired; toggle into "Walk" mode and control the player character's movement; build software with ROM construct abilities; or load/save the game from/to disk.

In order to converse with an NPC, the player simply points at the conversation balloon icon and presses the button on the joystick or presses the "T" key. Now, the player can choose what he wants to say by toggling statements back and forth in the conversational balloon which appears in the upper portion of the screen (as in **Cinemaware**'s *Sinbad and the Throne of the Falcon* game). When the player decides what he wants to say, he simply presses the button on the joystick and the conversation proceeds. Some of the choices enable the player to finish the phrase in the conversational balloon by typing in a word. This is very handy if you are trying to pick up a valuable clue. Fans of William Gibson's novels will be delighted to discover that several of the conversations utilize text from the novel itself.

In order to operate the PAX machine, the player simply points and clicks over the PAX icon. The PAX (a mnemonic for Public Access) machine operates like a friendly on-line information service. Players can check their electronic mail, upload or download funds, catch up on the Night City News, or send electronic mail. Besides having clues to assist in solving some of the game's puzzles, players will not want to miss a message on PAX or any of the dataspaces either. Jargon from the underground bulletin board culture is utilized and a wonderful sense of humor is often displayed. In particular, should the player character be arrested, finally pay his hotel bill, or "pull a Wilson" (cyberpunk slang for making a truly classic error), he may find himself becoming a hilarious story in the Night City News.

Night City Blues

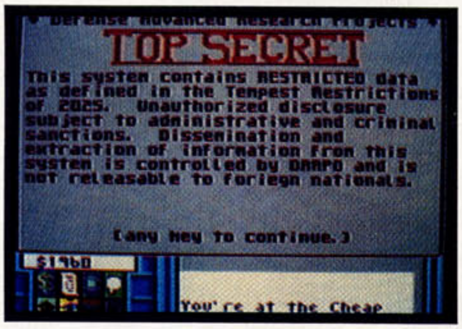
Should the player decide to physically explore the environs of Chiba City, he can access the "Walk" icon and travel from "room" to "room" as in any adventure game. Many of the "rooms" are, in actuality, street scenes which function like hallways in a castle or corridors in a dungeon. Each shop, restaurant, office, or hotel offers an interior room to explore. Fans of Gibson's novels and

short stories will enjoy actually entering "The Gentleman Loser" and the "Matrix Restaurant." It can be especially interesting to converse with Julius Deane, Shin, and the infamous Finn of "Metro Holografix" (In "Burning Chrome," this software store was located in New York, but it is located in Chiba City for purposes of the game).

If the player enters restricted areas, commits a crime, or is "framed," he will be arrested. The "Compu-judge" scenario is well-conceived and offers an interesting early obstacle in the game. Since the player is fined whenever he is found guilty, this becomes an irritating setback which is nothing near as fatal as many adventure games' early difficulties. If worse comes to worse, the player can always sell body parts to raise money, much as today's skid row residents sell plasma.

Up to this point, readers will note that one element almost invariably found in adventure games has not been mentioned. Combat does not occur in the physical realm in *Neuromancer*. Although there are a few shoot-outs and assassination attempts in Gibson's fiction, there are none in the game. Where then, you may well ask, is the excitement, risk, and challenge of the game? As in the books and stories, the excitement occurs when the hero invades cyberspace and gains access to private, corporate, government, and military data and artificial intelligence that is normally and legally inaccessible. Instead of laser pistols or plasma guns, though, the weapons utilized in this invasion are types of software. The right communications program to interface, virus to infiltrate, and shielding to protect the cyberdeck become the weapons and armor in this game.





Geometric Invasion

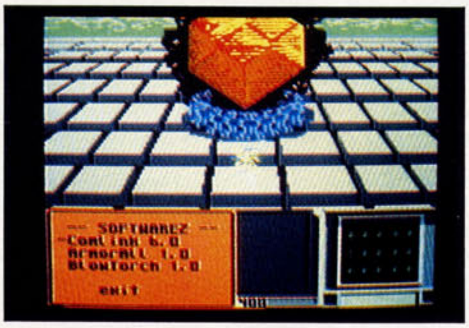
Cyberspace is a geometrical representation of electronic dataspaces. These shapes are spaced out on a grid which, in turn, represents the matrix. Cyberspace uses the same basic display as the physical realm. The upper portion of the screen shows the view of the matrix from the current cyberspace location, the left side of the lower screen is occupied by command icons, and the right side of the lower portion of the screen depicts the player character's electroencephalograph monitor (EEG) and enables the player to keep tabs on his brain waves. The command options in cyberspace enable one to check the direction he is heading on the matrix, take an inventory, check the list of acquired skills, access the ROM construct skills, save/load the game to/from the disk, or exit from cyberspace.

Where, then, does the conflict take place? It sounds like the player can move easily from one dataspace to another with impunity. This would be true except for ICE (Intrusion Countermeasures Electronics). Think of "ice" as a lower level AI (artificial intelligence) acting as a security guard attempting to keep you out of a dataspace. The player tries to select the right software to break through the layers of "ice" prior to the "ice" realizing that it is being infiltrated. If the player is unsuccessful, the ice layers will respond to an alarm such that the strength of the layers doubles and makes it significantly harder to break through.

In addition, there is a backup defense called an AI which can "flatline" the player character. Flatlining occurs when the AI hits the hero's brain with a neural shock and keeps the victim brain-dead for a period of time long enough to stop his physical body from functioning (In Gibson's *Count Zero*, Dixie Flatline was said to have been flatlined on three different occasions before he was finally killed.).

During the cyberspace portion of the game, players select the best icebreaking software for the job. Some dataspaces require slow-acting icebreakers and others necessitate one which acts with brute force. Players must also note when they encounter a back-up AI so that they can beat a hasty retreat rather than being flatlined. Once inside a given dataspace, there is no stopping the "cowboy."





Some Things Really Change

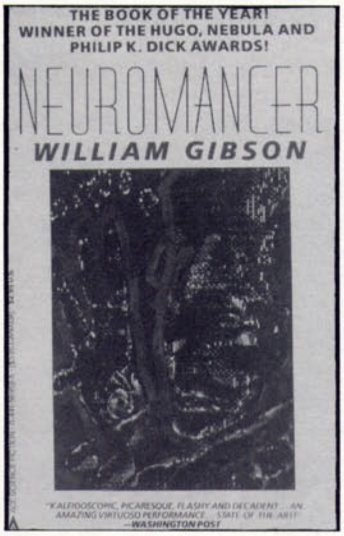
With the release of *Neuromancer*, **Interplay Productions** is continuing their trend toward adding more role-playing aspects to graphic adventure games. *Wasteland* involved the increase of personal characteristics, enhancement of weapons/armor, and advancement in skill levels through other means in addition to combat. Each time a player successfully utilized a skill, there was a percentage chance that the skill level would increase. This is similar to the approach of some of the better pen and paper role playing games. Also, the game allowed for more than one way to solve the puzzles in the game, reducing the frustration level considerably over the linear style adventure games.

This game goes a step farther. In addition to skill improvement and equipment enhancement, the game requires that the player act as a hacker detective and glean all the clues possible from PAX, BBSs, and dataspaces. The way one reacts to NPCs either in person or via electronic networking can determine whether you get the vital information necessary to solve the game's puzzles. Like *Wasteland*, *Neuromancer* is considerably non-linear and offers more than one way to solve each puzzle.

Neuromancer has taken considerable creative risks and broken several of the "conventions" of traditional computer role-playing games. Since there is no killing, no combat, no character classes or character generation, and no monsters or magic, it will be interesting to see how well this adventure game is received. Science fiction enthusiasts should be thrilled with the faithfulness of this game to its literary roots and Gibson fans, in particular, should be hoping that the game is successful enough to warrant a sequel based on *Count Zero*.

An Interview with William Gibson

CGW was privileged to question Hugo, Nebula, and Philip K. Dick award-winning novelist, William Gibson, about the upcoming computer game based on his first novel, Neuromancer. *We found his answers interesting enough to share with our readers.*

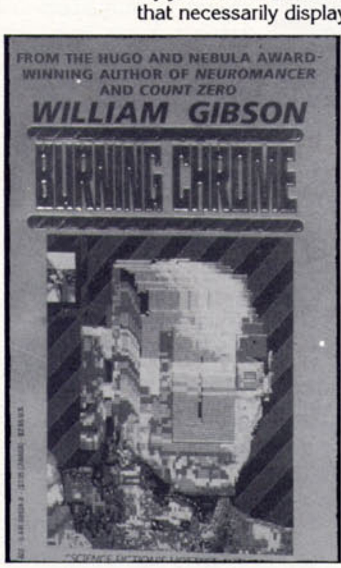


CGW: *Who originally conceived the idea of converting* Neuromancer *into a computer game (It's such a natural!)?*

Gibson: The computer game rights were part of a package, sold along with the film rights. The group who bought the package were already in touch with Timothy Leary, who brought in Brian Fargo of **Interplay** *[Ed.: an affiliated publisher of Mediagenic]*. We had a long and very interesting discussion, then, at Leary's house, and things took off from there.

CGW: *Besides creating a fascinating and believable future environment/story line, complete with corporate oligarchy and countercultural anarchy, what kind of input were you afforded toward game design?*

Gibson: I was offered a lot more opportunity for input than I felt capable of acting on. As a novelist, I'm not primarily concerned with the creation of what I believe are called "gameable" scenarios. My job is to make something that *feels* real, rather than something that necessarily displays levels of internal logic below (or beyond) the surface of the text. It's an interesting distinction, actually . . .



CGW: *At Activision, now Mediagenic, there was, for a time, a lot of talk that the project simply could not be done. Several insisted that the technology wasn't yet here. Did you (and possibly Dr. Leary) originally intend to work with a non-traditional interface (Obviously, not wetware or biochips, but some kind of bio-feedback?)?*

Gibson: I suppose the ultimate *Neuromancer* game would pit you against a *real* AI . . . And I like the idea of bio-feedback, though this is the first I've heard of it.

CGW: *Your stories, as well as the game, are replete with jargon from the BBS underground. Is it safe to assume that William Gibson himself networks his way through the "boards?" If so, what kind of "deck" do you use?*

Gibson: I hate to disappoint you, but my BBS experience is limited in the extreme. I'd never so much as touched a PC when I wrote *Neuromancer*. I wrote it on an ancient Hermes manual typewriter—the "clockwork" typewriter Case sees on Julius Deane's desk. I think the jargon comes through because that's what I was working from in the first place. The science fiction underground and the real computer underground tend to overlap a lot, so I was exposed to the *people* first. And what fascinated me was the passion these people brought to the topic, and the *poetry* of the jargon, rather than what they might actually be talking about.

These days I use a beat-up Apple IIc and the word-processing end of *Appleworks*. I do have a modem but I don't really use it for anything. People expect me to write on something matte black with all the serial numbers sandpapered off . . .

CGW: *Some of your stories, like "Dogfight!" which was reprinted in* Burning Chrome, *seem very cognizant of the world of computer games. Do you play any computer games? If so, do you have a favorite or a favorite genre? What are the limitations of the genre as opposed to printed fiction with its relatively linear storytelling? Has computer gaming ever influenced your writing?*

Gibson: More disappointment! I don't play computer games. Mainly because writing fiction forces me to sit in front of a screen all day anyway, and when I'm not doing that I'd much rather be riding my mountain bike or just staring blankly at the ceiling, listening to music, whatever. Writing fiction is too much *like* playing a computer game; the reader gets a linear story, ultimately, but the writer has had to make countless decisions in order to arrive at it. And it takes even longer to do that than to play a really sophisticated computer game!

When Michael Swanwick and I wrote "Dogfight!", I suppose I thought of it as an extension of arcade technology, but the storyline was Michael's idea. I'd had a sort of dream-image, of these tiny biplanes flying above a pooltable; Michael took that and worked up a rationale for it, a *why*, imagined the required technology, and there we were. That's a pretty typical example of my working method.

CGW: *There is a running theme throughout your body of work which was quoted in an essay by Norman Spinrad: "The streets have their own use for technology." Do you perceive this "streetwise" technology as a positive, neutral, or negative impact on social evolution? Does the evolution of computer entertainment have a place in this?*

Gibson: Positive or negative, it's just *there*. We're surrounded by the stuff, we're *of* it. I'm old enough (40) to remember when there was *no tv*. Then there was, a little round screen the size of a saucer, mounted in this big box of varnished wood. Hold that image while you fastforward about thirty-five years to . . . what? MTV? How could anyone have predicted *this* from the fact of *that*?

Computer entertainment will probably have a similar impact. I don't see why it shouldn't. Although I don't think we've yet grasped what it is exactly that television has *already* done to us . . .

CGW: *Are you happy with the environment of the* Neuromancer *computer game and the way the designers have interfaced characters (like Armitage, Finn, and Shin) and places (like The Gentleman Loser, Cheap Hotel, and Metro Holografix) from your fiction with the gameplay of trying to break through the ice ("Intrusion Countermeasures Electronics")? What advances and/or differences would you like to see if the company produced* Count Zero?

Gibson: I think it's an interesting environment; the characters and place-names *are* the texture of the book, from a writer's point of view.

I think the key to a *Count Zero* game might be the voodoo entities. It might be fun if you could have these powerful, rather perverse personalities—who are actually the scattered fragments of the cyberspace overmind at the end of *Neuromancer*—have them sort of popping into your game at the worst possible times, making demands, insisting you cut private deals with them . . .

CGW: *Since the future projected into your fiction is, like our modern society, fraught with violence, do you object to the fact that you cannot be "killed" in* Neuromancer? *Is this at philosophical odds with your future or is it more in line with the reconstruction of Case after he had been "flatlined" prior to the action in the novel?*

Gibson: I think I'd go with the analogy to flatlining. Or cloning, as practised by the Tessier-Ashpool's. And, really, with a game at this level of complexity, I think you want a way to get back on track if you've been axed.

The Politics of War

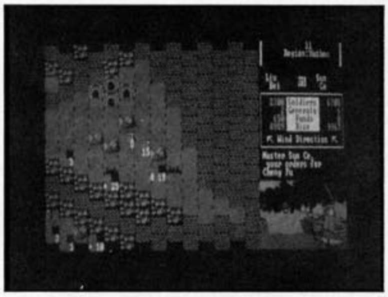
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program is that, unlike human opponents, the computer "masters" stay bought.

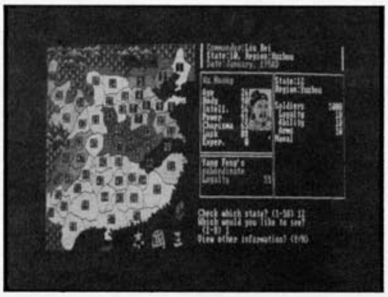
If the player wants to accomplish this without lowering the economic value of his home province, he can simply have his governors send gifts to lower the animosity of surrounding provinces. Also, the player should use at least one governor to examine as many outside provinces as is practical. The player can take notes on the intelligence acquired by his surrogate and offer gifts or bribes on his own province's turn as they are needed.

Finally, it is never a good idea to *Loot* without good reason. In desperation, to search for beautiful women as gifts for one's generals, or making a quick buck are acceptable reasons. Nevertheless, looting costs the master circa 75 points of loyalty in that province and will cost several thousand points of rice to get that loyalty back. Remember as well that bandit attacks are worse when the peasants hate you or there is a war going on along the route. So, don't waste long term resources on short term gains.

The Mystery of History Making



There are some peculiar features in the game design. For example, equipment costs the same whether you have no men or 100,000 men. One hundred points of equipment is as high as it is possible to go, so don't buy more than you need. I quickly observed that the "Training" and "Equipment" ratings are purchased for the particular general and *not* his troops. No matter how many soldiers there are, the ratings cost the same amount for the general and stay at the same numbers. This seems unreasonable.



Further, if you are defeated, there is a good 20-30% chance that some retreating generals will be captured by the enemy. The general's troops are lost along with all of the gold and rice you have sent with him. Note that these losses occur even when your general has *voluntarily* retreated from the field. It would seem that a voluntary retreat would minimize such things.

(Continued on page 34)

The Wisdom of Sun Yat Arneson

A good early game strategy is to build up the economies of your interior provinces. Then, build a ring of buffer states around that central core. Corner provinces are easy to make "safe," but they are usually quite poor.

Expand quickly into as many provinces as is practical in the early scenarios. Don't worry about whether you can hold them or not. The fact is, you get to use their resources for, at least, a little while. More importantly, each province that you control gives you an additional command to perform.

Note that when you lose a battle, you lose everything. So, if an attack looks likely, loot a province completely and drag the goodies back home. Losing early wars can be deadly and winning an early campaign gains more enemies.

If a general defects to you in battle, be certain to "retreat" him. A defecting general cannot be trusted until you can "build" his loyalty. Whatever you do, do *not* let him guard the rice!

Leave your master out of the front line action. There is too much a master needs to do than to be "stuck" fighting a war. Also, should your master be killed, the loyalty of everyone in his kingdom will be seriously weakened. Most generals' loyalty will drop by some 20 points with regard to the "new" master. Generals who have their loyalty drop below 30 points may even defect and take their troops with them! Do not send your master on personal missions unless it is very safe or very important.Learn to use the *Simultaneous* attack. This tactic will increase a defender's losses by about 50% and allows each force adjacent to the enemy to attack in turn. Thus, the same attack can be delivered several times in a row.

Avoid the *Charge* tactic when you really need to advance and the odds are 4-1 in your favor or higher. Such an attack also tends to kill the defending general that you ordinarily might have captured.

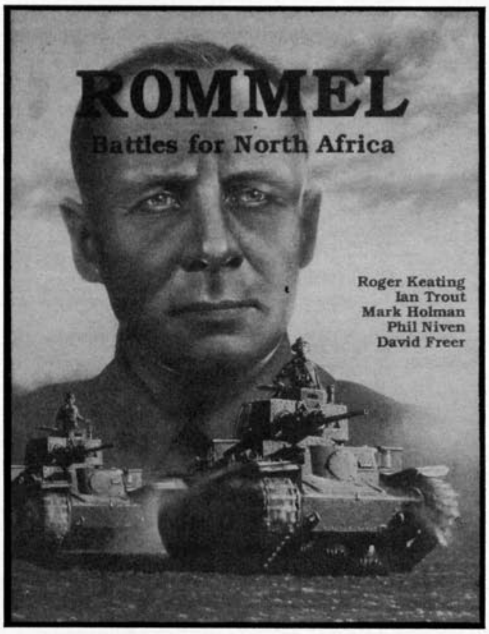
It is often useful to equip the troops with *metal* weapons and train them sufficiently. Actually, equipment seems to be more important than training in fighting battles. Training increases mobility on the first turn of a war. However, all troops have an upper movement limit of "15." This can be gained simply by sitting in one spot. Note that equipment will initially slow your troops down, so you are faced with a typical trade-off.

Romance of the Three Kingdoms is not a game of absolutes. There are good moves and reasonable chances, so it is safe to assume that you will not get burned if your moves are sensible. The computer, however, can do all of that scouting and checking around that takes us mere humans a lot of time. It can and will find your weak points and exploit them better than you can, so set the difficulty low at first.

Rommel: Battles For North Africa

by Jay Selover

The latest release from **Strategic Studies Group** in their *Battlefront* series, *Rommel: Battles For North Africa*, may be their best game since they burst on the scene with *Carriers At War* back in 1984. Pretty strong words, right? How do you justify such an endorsement for a game which is really just a collection of scenarios using the Battlefront design system? Well, I don't know, exactly. This game just feels so right. Here's my best guess: the game contains eight of the best developed scenarios I've ever seen. They are constructed within the framework of a game system which is appropriate for the type of actions simulated and the system itself has been around long enough that we have learned to accept with grace its peccadillos.



TITLE:	Rommel: Battles For North Africa
SYSTEMS:	Apple, C64/128
PRICE:	$40.00
DESIGNERS:	Roger Keating, Ian Trout, Mark Holman, Phil Niven, & David Freer
PUBLISHER:	Strategic Studies Group Walnut Creek, CA

Rommel is designed (as are virtually all of SSG's releases these days) within the framework of the Battlefront system. The game system has evolved so little since the original release of Battlefront that I feel a bit silly describing it once again. Nevertheless, for any recently-emerged under-rock-dwellers, here again is the capsule description. The game system simulates operational level engagements between opposing forces up to one Corps in size. The maneuver elements on the map are battalions, though the smallest organization the player can interact with is a parent regiment. Ground scales range from about 800 meters up to about 2 kilometers per hex and the time scale uses four turns per day (3 daylight turns and one turn for night activity).

The real focus of the Battlefront system is putting the player into a realistic role of the overall commander present at the battle. Thus, the orders you can give to each of the (up to) three divisions under your control each turn are limited to: allocation of divisional assets among the regiments, allocation of off-board artillery and air support, movement orders for the divisional headquarters, and individual orders to the component regiments. These regimental orders constitute the heart of moving and fighting with your units, and they are constrained within realistic limits. Your available orders for the regiments will depend on the contact status of each regiment with enemy units. Orders include movement towards either scenario objective hexes or contacted enemy units, four levels of attack (probe, prepare, assault, and exploit), three levels of defensive mode (support, defend, and delay), and entering "reserve" mode (time to retire, regroup, and rest).

When you actually play the game, the entire system is menu driven and becomes old hat fairly quickly. The access system was really one of the best design features of Battlefront, and not to have meddled with it in subsequent games is a credit to the designers. You fight your battle (a scenario) somewhat by the seat of your pants; there are no hard and fast combat values available for your troops and only scant intelligence available on enemy forces. For each of your units, you will know: whether it is infantry, armor, armored cars, anti-tank, or another of the fifteen discreet unit types available; what types of vehicles or major weapons are utilized (if you don't know what "Pz IIj" or "Bofors 40mm" means, that's tough, there is no glossary); what their casualty level is (in increments of 10%); what their fitness level is (ranging from fresh to exhausted); whether they are "routed" or not; and their administrative and supply situations. For enemy units, you don't know anything until they have been "contacted" by friendly forces. Then, you are told whether a unit is "large" or "small" and "infantry" or "armor." Each turn, you can give orders to each of the regiments under your control. Then, you sit back and watch as the two to four component battalions in each regiment (the actual "units" on the map) move and fight according to their regimental commander's interpretation of your orders. The system design does a good job of removing superfluous decisions from your role as overall commander. That is, you don't, and a Corps commander wouldn't, determine the hex-by-hex line of march for each battalion in each regiment in each division in your Corps. That level of detail is left to underlings (in this case, the computer).

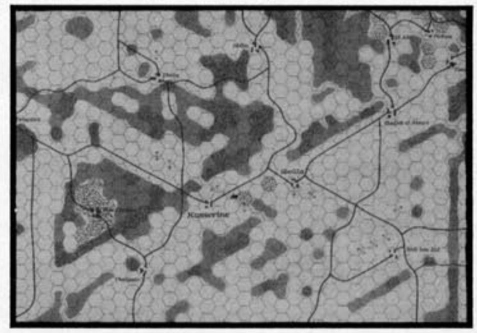
So, that's the *Battlefront* system in a (pretty big) capsule. What, then, is new about *Rommel*? Well, the folks at SSG make a pretty big deal of the new system refinements compared to previous releases, *Battles In Normandy* and *Halls Of Montezuma*; but you really won't even notice them. One possible exception is "brittleness." Now, as in *Halls of Montezuma*, some formations can be specified in a scenario as brittle. This means that if they are chewed up beyond a certain point, they have been permanently damaged and no amount of rest in reserve status will bring them back up. You should make a note of any potentially brittle units before playing any scenario, and be very careful to monitor their casualty levels. Other system changes will probably be welcome additions if you are currently designing your own scenarios using any of the *Battlefront* games, but "players" just won't be aware of them too much.

Speaking of designing your own scenarios, you can't really discuss *Rommel* (or any of the *Battlefront* games) without mentioning the scenario design utilities which are included. The fact that SSG games are so "open" is still much to be lauded. The last 20 pages of the *Rommel* booklet describes how to use the "Warplan" utility to either design your own scenarios or make any modification you desire to the *Rom-*

mel scenarios. You can access virtually every element of what defines virtually everything in a game; design your own maps, design your own graphics icons (using the new "Warpaint" utility), design your own units with whatever sorts of capabilities you want, design your own organizations of units, and design your own scenario parameters. In essence, there is absolutely nothing to have kept you from designing all eight of the scenarios in *Rommel* yourself. So, why not do it yourself, right? Why should you pay for this whole game, when you could have done it yourself with just the utilities? I'll tell you why. It is a *lot* of work to design a scenario. It is more work to input the mounds of data that make up a scenario and it is a tremendous undertaking to design a scenario that is realistic, balanced, historically accurate, and fun to play.

That's what it comes down to, basically, with this game. You are paying all of that money for someone to have developed those eight scenarios for you within the *Battlefront* framework. Is that the kind of thing you want to pay for? My answer is a resounding "Yes." There is no way in the world that I would ever have spent the time to do so complete a job on similar scenarios (I also don't make laminated mapsheets or 72 page rulebooks for my homemade scenarios). The situations are all interesting; the forces, objectives, and terrain types are varied; the details are historically accurate; and the system allows the flow of a typical battle to develop in a very realistic manner.

The selection of scenarios is excellent; no setpiece assaults like Second El Alemain; mostly fluid situations; and due consideration to some of the less well publicized aspects of North Africa (Scenario One on the British drive into Vichy Syria and Lebanon during June, 1941, is a good example). Pure routs are avoided (Beda Fomm might be a fun solitaire scenario to design yourself), and many of the well known battles are represented by scenarios covering only the most interesting parts of the action. The scenarios include three from the 1942 desert campaign (Sidi Rezegh, The Cauldron, and Alem el Halfa), three from the Tunisian campaign (Kasserine, Maknassy, and Tebourga Gap), a hypothetical Invasion of Malta during 1942, and the aforementioned action in Syria.



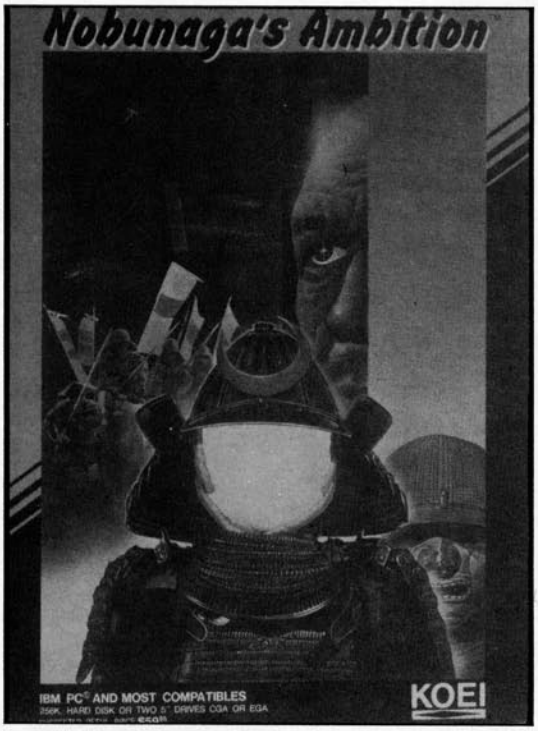
That is the essence of *Rommel*: good scenarios, good development, good system. Wait a minute, what about that line about the *Battlefront* system having "peccadillos" we have learned to accept? (I'll bet Ian Trout stopped reading this review right there!) Well, I stand by the statement, but my gripes with the *Battlefront* system are minor compared to my enjoyment of the current offering. Rather than take a chance of confusing the message of this review, I'll hold that discourse for some future "commentary" article. The message of this review?—Excellent game.

The Politics of War

(Continued from page 31)

The Mesmerism of History Making

There are, frankly, aspects of this game that are poor. For example, it would have been nice to be able to print out a hard copy of statistical information. Providing record sheets for the generals would save a lot of time, too. Some of the combat mechanics mentioned earlier do not make sense and should be changed. Nevertheless, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* is a great historical simulation and will keep players at their keyboards for many a night in order to win their empires. It has economics, intrigue, bribery, covert action, diplomacy, war, and more! There are many ways beyond simple conquest to accomplish one's goals. I most heartily recommend *Romance* to all serious game players out there.



TITLE:	Nobunaga's Ambition
SYSTEM:	IBM with CGA or EGA
PLAYERS:	1-8
PRICE:	$59.95
DESIGNER:	Bill Swartz (American Version)
PUBLISHER:	Koei Corp. Torrance, CA

NOBUNAGA'S AMBITION

by M. Evan Brooks

Nobunaga's Ambition is a detailed economic / diplomatic / political / military simulation of the unification of Japan in the Sixteenth Century. The period is one known to few Occidental gamers and the beauty of *Nobunaga's Ambition* is that it painlessly teaches history while maximizing enjoyment and sheer fun.

This reviewer admits to an abysmal ignorance of the period covered, aside from having read and watched James Clavell's *Shogun*. In fact, the title of the game almost reminds one of what Buffalo Bob used to say to the Peanut Gallery on the *Howdy Doody* show—"Kowabunga, kids!" Nevertheless, instead of a childish kid show from the Fifties, **Koei Corporation** has presented an articulate simulation.

Oda Nobunaga was a daimyo in central Japan. Machiavellian by nature, ruthless by method, and successful by

(Continued on page 48)

The Wisdom of Oda Brooks

(1) Be patient; early aggression is the surest road to defeat. Since the daimyo begins at an early age, one can look forward to c. 40 more years of life. Therefore, develop a sufficient base in terms of both economic and military spheres before expanding.

(2) Initial moves should be confined to increasing tax rates, productivity, and the military. As morale decreases in both military and civilian sectors, some assets will have to be "squandered" on "people goals", or as the Federal Government currently defines it, "quality initiatives".

(3) Alliances can be rewarding; however, carefully consider the advantages and drawbacks of early pacts. While pacts/marriages may insure peaceful borders, insure that a route of expansion is available.

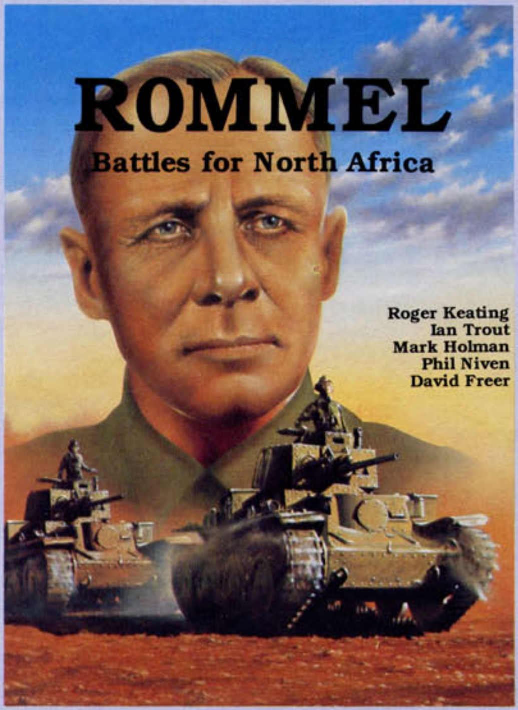
(4) Be careful with computer-administered fiefs. Military fiefs will become aggressive subordinates, often embarking on rash conquests and suffering ignominious defeats. This reviewer recommends careful supervision of computer-administered fiefs; military fiefs should be restricted to rear areas, where they can maximize training and numbers of recruits without having a target for premature expansion.

(5) While restructuring the army is somewhat costly early in the game (30 gold pieces), the need for such action is prime. Combat success is dependent upon the bigger unit pounding the smaller unit into submission. The usual army is composed of five units (command, cavalry, rifles, and 2 infantry). If the command unit is destroyed, the battle is lost; however, this unit can usually be protected by terrain and other units. Therefore, this reviewer recommends adjustment of initial disposition (20-20-20-20-20) into a strong wedge (10-59-21-0-0) formation, i.e. weakening the command unit, maximizing the cavalry and rifles, and deleting the infantry.

(6) Some commands are less effective than others. Stealing peasants is rarely used, and as the designer of the American version, Bill Swartz, notes, arranging marriage pacts are analogous to nuclear missiles, i.e. use them carefully!

Strategic Studies Group Presents

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Alem el Halfa Malta Kasserine
Maknassy Tebourga Gap

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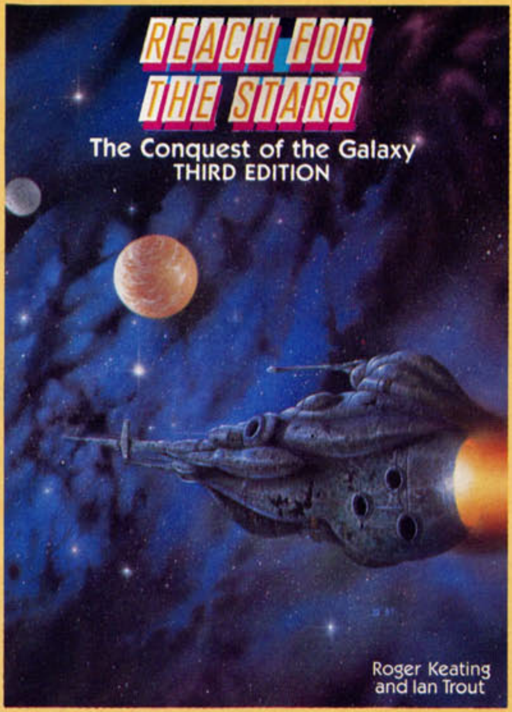
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CAMPAIGN '88

(Continued from page 15)

functioning, the moral is to organize often and early. Also, just as in real life, fund raising is directly proportional to one's organizational efficiency. Organization is a very important underlying principle in both the game and "real life."

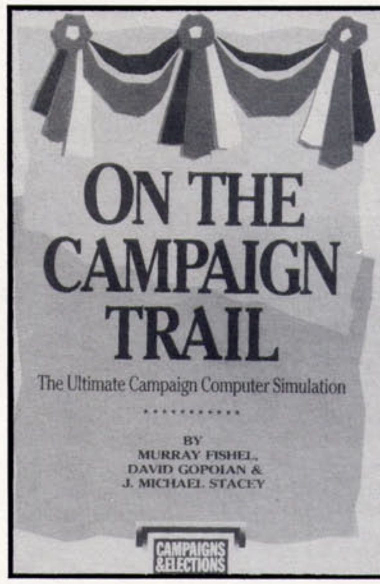
What is not authentic about this product's "parlor game" approach to the presidential election is that any player may call an election in any state at any time he/she has been organized in that state for, at least, four turns and happens to be located in a state with the same color code. On the other hand, since the one who organizes first in a given state will have an organizational advantage *whenever* the election is held, this is probably not critical to the outcome.

The third lesson to be learned from this "parlor game" approach to politics is that "Politics is not pretty." In fact, "dirty tricks" are a vital part of the strategy available to players and an integral part of the fun in the game. If sex scandals, rumors of plagiarism, and campaign contributions linked to questionable contract awards sound familiar to you, it is because *Campaign Promises* has gleaned a "Murphy's Law" list of 25 possible acts of campaign sabotage. Learning to use these disasters effectively is important to the game.

Finally, candidates must learn to use advertising effectively. This is the final step prior to receiving the election results in any given state. Each candidate is allowed to type in what he/she plans to spend in advertising for that state. This has a direct bearing on the third kind of votes in the vote count, advertising votes. In one of our games, judicious use of advertising dollars in close elections (where all candidates were organized within a turn of each other and had an equal number of promises factored in) made the difference in five key states (and ultimately, the entire election). Actually, the only kind of votes that players cannot impact in this game are the fourth kind, just plain luck votes.

All in all, *Campaign Promises* is fast enough to be a good family game; offers enough strategy to intrigue the thinking gamer; provides enough luck to attract the casual gamer; teaches enough valid lessons to make citizens think at election time; and is entertaining enough to make one play it over and over. If one does not want *too* cerebral a game, but is interested in politics, *Campaign Promises* has a lot to offer.

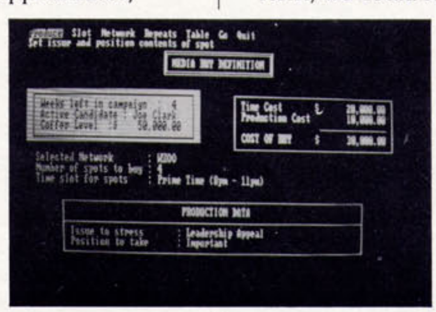
Paint Your Bandwagon



TITLE:	On The Campaign Trail
SYSTEMS:	IBM
# PLAYERS:	2
PRICE:	$29.95
DESIGNERS:	Murray Fishel, David Gopoian, & J. Michael Stacey
PUBLISHER:	Campaigns & Elections Washington, D.C.

On The Campaign Trail is a detailed and extremely well-documented simulation of a senatorial campaign in a fictitious state with finely balanced demographics. It has a wealth of information and options at the players' fingertips. The lessons to be learned in this game are not fleeting and can easily be seen at work on both the local and national political scenes.

The first time we played this simulation (There is no computer opponent, so you will need to find a friend to oppose you), we wanted to do everything possible. We wanted to raise funds, make campaign appearances, use direct mailing, produce media spots, select media buys, and take surveys. Utilizing these weapons, we were determined to run an aggressive and issue-oriented campaign.



If you expect to ever succeed in real world politics, you should *never* run an issue-oriented campaign. The documentation makes use of Benjamin Page's "Theory of Political Ambiguity," a principle enunciated in the *American Political Science Review* in 1976. Stated succinctly, Page suggested that taking a position on *any* policy issue involves a voter trade-off. Therefore, candidates should focus on general "consensus" issues where most voters agree ("Issues" like the need for leadership, experience, and vigor).

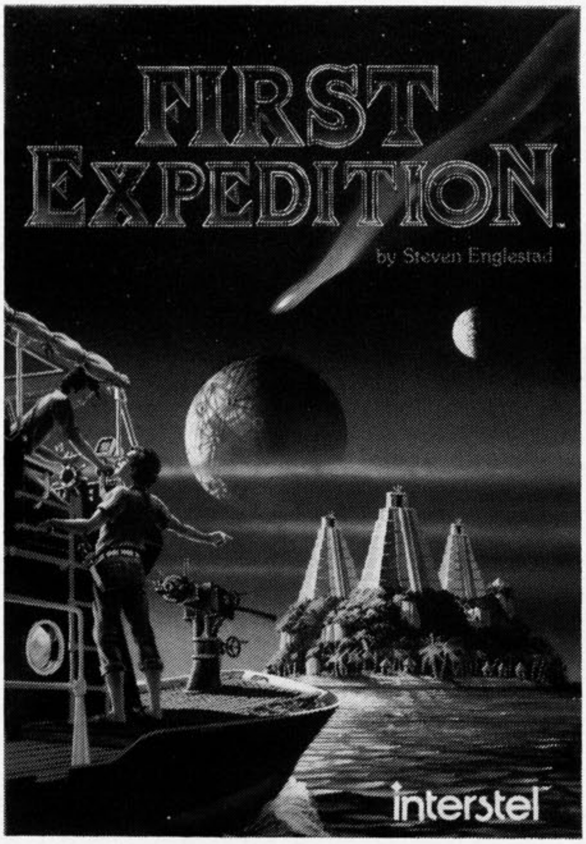
Even though the game affords candidates the greatest number of opportunities to take a stand on different issues, we discovered that the player who consistently stuck to consensus issues did much better than the player who carved out a distinctive policy position. How does this hold up in real life? Note who the presidential candidates are. Are the nominees the ones who pushed "issues" or general leadership ability during the primary campaigns? Indeed, weren't the issue-oriented Babbitt and Gephardt eliminated very early from the Democratic race? How about the issue-oriented Robert Dole in the Republican race?

Another significant lesson to be learned in this simulation had to do with timing. The documentation maps out a formula for a successful political campaign. The first phase is devoted to developing "Name Recognition" and takes place from 100-45 days prior to election day. In the game, this must be accomplished by raising funds and using the media effectively. We learned to use the survey function to determine where our candidate was behind among the viewers of each television network. Then, we could focus our media buys onto those networks where we needed improvement.

The second phase focuses on "Candidate Credibility" and takes place from 45-21 days before the election. We found that this is a good time to bring in celebrities and assign them to speak in the counties best suited demographically for their message. This may also be the best time to find a consensus issue like being concerned about the federal deficit and getting some mileage out of that position.

(Continued on page 47)

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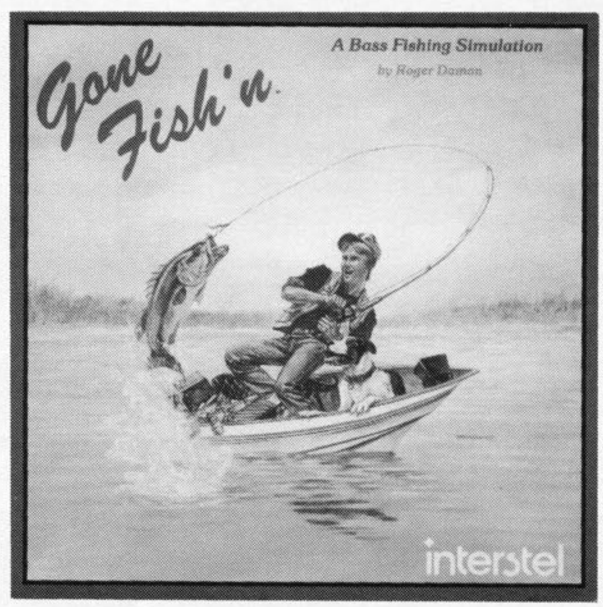
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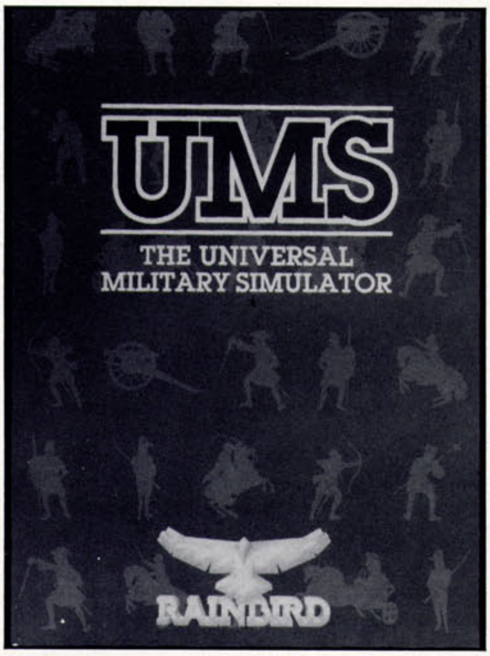
ELECTRONIC ARTS®

U.M.S.
Another Look

by M. Evan Brooks

Introduction

Universal Military Simulator (UMS) has already been subjected to considerable coverage. With a "Sneak Preview" (CGW No. 43, January 1988) and a "Modification" article by the designer (CGW No. 48, June 1988), the product has been billed as "definitely a breakthrough product". Is UMS a breakthrough product or one merely of media hyperbole? Naturally, the editors at CGW assigned the review to this iconoclast, "affectionately" referred to as the "Howard Cosell of wargame critics" (at least, those are the nicer things that have been said).



To avoid the suspense, the answer is yes and no. UMS is a new and innovative wargame—it does represent a breakthrough in some aspects. However, it is a first generation of the game structure and certain defects/bugs/omissions are present. Whether the game belongs in your library depends on how you feel about pioneer efforts. That is, their innovation may cover defects which will be corrected in later productions.

TITLE:	U.M.S. Universal Military Simulator
SYSTEMS:	Atari ST/IBM
REVIEWED ON:	IBM
PRICE:	$39.95
DESIGNER:	D. Ezra Sidran
PUBLISHER:	Rainbird Software Menlo Park, CA

Documentation

The documentation is well done. The user manual succintly delineates the use of the simulation as well as design modifications that the user can input. The scenario handbook presents an excellent summary of the five scenarios included in the basic game (Arbela, Hastings, Marston Moor, Waterloo and Gettysburg). Mr. Sidran has several additional scenarios under construction taken from Creasy's *Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World* (Tentatively, these would include Blenheim, Saratoga and Valmy, plus a scenario from World War II (a Bulge scenario has already been finished), as well as an American Civil War disk (Shiloh, Chattanooga, and Antietam) and Vietnam disk (by Ed Bever) due to be released in late September. Players can also download user-created scenarios from **Compuserve**'s Atari ST SIG. Some are also available for downloading on GEnie.

The Game

UMS *is* impressive. There is no disputing that fact. While unprotected, the infamous "type in the third word of the second paragraph of page 13" is used to prevent illegal duplication. However, once the player gains access to the simulation, the topographical battlefield is an inspiring sight. Even non-wargamers will be impressed. There is no question that the topographical terrain is the star of this product. UMS is a "miniatures" simulation with three-dimensional "feel" reduced to the two-dimensional screen.

One can choose to view the battlefield from an infinite variety of perspectives (e.g. north, northwest, zoom southeast, etc.), as well as looking at a particular sector in depth. On top of the views, UMS allows any of these views to be quickly and easily dumped to a printer for hardcopy access.

The sheer number of units tend to overshadow one another, but UMS allows one to zoom in on each particular unit in order to determine strength, type, morale, efficiency, moves, speed and status.

Turns can be variable in duration, but in the "canned" scenarios are generally an hour and a half. Thus, the user must order his army to the objective and watch its execution. Traffic management is a definite consideration herein.

Contact may be viewed in detail or in overview. In detail, each separate engagement is rated for strength, weaponry, terrain elevation, weaponry, morale, status, efficiency and accuracy. Interim and final analyses of battle results show casualties in gross numbers, percentages, and also a graphic representation of both sides in a "pie chart".

Units already available for use include infantry (heavy/light), cavalry (heavy/light), archers, elephants, chariots, knights, catapults, pikemen, artillery (field/horse/armored), headquarters, armor, airborne and assault troops. In addition, one can create up to another six types of troops (e.g. space marines, orcs, MASH units).

The Pluses

(1) UMS is an easily modified construction set. The terrain views and the facility with which one can create both terrain and unit types defies the imagination.

(2) The computer can be used with 0-2 players. Watching the computer play itself is a valid learning tool, as one can observe the general flow of battle which the computer develops. In solitaire play, one can allow the computer to decide its own strategy or compel it in several modes (e.g. offensive, defensive, left/right flank attack, double envelopment, center thrust).

(3) UMS's greatest strength lies in its flexibility. While titled as a "Universal Military Simulator", even the designer concedes that the title is somewhat exaggerated. Nevertheless, UMS is a new concept and one whose descendants will pave a new path in computer wargaming.

The Minuses

(1) UMS is not a true Universal simulator. Terrain effects are limited to four levels; this means that while geographic

height can be portrayed, there is simply no provision for urban combat.

Mr. Sidran has acknowledged this. Initially, the simulator was to be a construction set with an emphasis on open field simulations. Portraying the effects of urban combat are simply beyond the capabilities of the simulation. *[Ed.: Not to mention the lack of water with no rivers or seas. Sorry, Admiral Nelson, you are not part of this universe!]*

(2) Victory conditions are dependent on enemy casualties. While this is normally the case, terrain objectives can override normal military guidance. Mr. Sidran's modification (cf. CGW #48) includes a "quick fix;" one simply creates a "wild card" unit with a high strength value but a firepower of zero. The problem with this is that it is a one-way street. Once the victory unit is overrun, there is no reason for the opponent to retake the objective. Thus, there is no way to compel a see-saw battle over a key terrain site. Once it has fallen, its utility in game terms is finished.

(3) The Artillery/Armor Phenomenon. If one examines the power of artillery, there is a sense of surprise. The units are *powerful*. Since artillery can "shoot and scoot" or vice versa, players quickly learn that optimal tactics include using artillery in pre-twentieth century as the cutting edge of the assault. The Napoleonic tactic of massing artillery in the face of the enemy has been modified to include massing artillery *through* the face of the enemy—not realistic, but effective.

(4) The program execution is *slow*. UMS redraws the battle with each move. The slowness of the IBM execution quickly turns a tense battle situation into a tedious waiting game. This reviewer has been told that the ST version has a much faster execution, but IBM users simply have to bear with it.

(5) The simulation covers set piece battles. There is no easy way to allow reinforcements to enter the battlefield at a later time. While one could expand the battlefield and place the reinforcements further from the point of decision, this is an artificial fix.

Observations and Preconceptions

There is an interesting phenomenon of movement in UMS. Moving across elevation changes costs an additional movement point; but if this is the last point, the movement can be made. For example, if a unit can move four movement points, the following example can occur. If the elevation change occurs at point two, the unit will only be able to move three points in total. However, if the terrain changes at point four, the unit will be able to "crest" the hill.

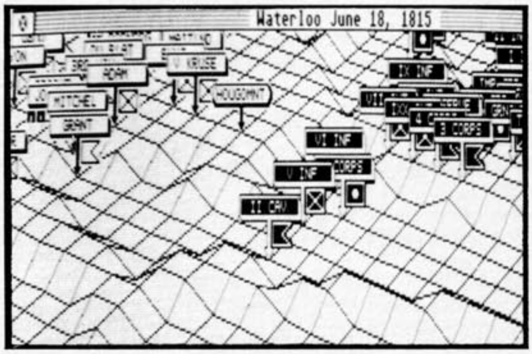
This is a basic change from most wargames. Traditional board and computer wargames "round down", i.e. if one lacks sufficient points to make the objective, then one has to wait until the following turn. On reflection, though, that convention is artificial. It is just as accurate to acknowledge that units nearing their objective may rush the last few feet to make the grade. Thus, while traditional wargamers may feel that this "bonus" is incorrect, they should examine their mindset beforehand.

Also, note that scenarios have been modified for play balance. Thus, at Waterloo, the Prussians have been omitted. That's like throwing a surprise party and forgetting to invite the guest of honor.

Conclusions

UMS is an easily modified construction set. Its strength lies in the terrain and the ability to view the battlefield from different angles. Its weakness lies in its attempting to accomplish more than it can deliver.

Mr. Sidran has considered revision of a "War College" version which would add to the complexity and realism. Currently, UMS delivers an open terrain set-piece battle. The computer intelligence is not overly bright (given the burdens placed upon it, this is not surprising; a one scenario game [e.g. Gettysburg or Hastings] can develop more intelligence for the specific battle situation—a general construction set has to be somewhat accurate overall).



Playability is somewhat awkward and the end result is a modified "beer and pretzels" conflict simulation. Then again, sometimes a little beer and pretzels hit the spot.

Overall, UMS is impressive, but its flaws are apparent. If you are interested in creating your own battles, then UMS is highly recommended. On the other hand, if you desire to learn accurate lessons from military history, then UMS may be a shade too general. This first generation simulation is an interesting design; its third or fourth generation descendant may prove essential.

Scorpion's Tale

Warning: Scorpia, the venerated storyteller in Adventuredom's most famous tavern ("Scorpion's Tale") conjures up illuminating hints about games. Let the reader beware!

Ahhhh . . . summer is winding down and autumn is almost here (about time, too!). Fred is back from the Grues Convention, where the proposal against daylight savings time was passed unanimously, so he's feeling pretty pleased at the moment. Let's hope he doesn't get carried away and make the drinks *too* strong. Your mind needs to be in good shape for a P.A.R.T.I. of another kind.

Dr. Dumont's Wild P.A.R.T.I. (for Particle Accelerator and Reality Translation Integrator) is a bizarre mental journey inside a sophisticated computer. Not that you planned on this, it happens sort of by accident. Dr. Dumont (just this side of being a mad scientist) is trying to teach the computer how to view subatomic particles, in particular Particle X. In order to teach the computer how to see it, he needs a human being to link up mentally with the machine. He doesn't mean you, though. He just wants you to get inside the shell so he can make some adjustments. Naturally, something goes wrong and before you can say "subatomic theory," your mind is inside the computer. What fun!

Ok, maybe not such fun, as the only way to get out again is to view the mysterious Particle X, represented in the game as that famous celebrity of stage and screen, Fred, A Star (*no* relation to my Fred!).

You begin in what seems to be an apartment, but there are some odd things about it, like the fact that some of the furniture is just painted on the walls and not real at all or the window that's a sheet of clear plastic looking out on a blue prairie with a pyramid on it. Right off, you get the idea that this is going to be a weird one. You've got the right idea.

There isn't much in the apartment aside from the jeans, so after taking those it's time to see what else is out there. What you come to is a lab room, much like the one you were just in (or are still in, depending on how you want to look at it) before all this started. Radiating off this room are eight entrances that lead to interesting places (including the apartment, which you won't need to go back to for some time).

You can visit them in almost any order, but I highly recommend going north first to the schoolhouse. Here, you find out some of things you need to do before you can get your mind out of the computer. Mainly, you have to find five keys to put in the desk and obtain five mystery objects (or elements, as the game calls them) to prepare yourself for the shutdown (which sounds pretty ominous). A piece of cake, right?

One thing you should do is check your score frequently, especially each time you pick up an item in the game. This is the only way to tell if you have found one of the five shutdown elements (the keys are pretty obvious). You really do need all of them.



Oh yes, one more thing. Learn to meditate (with the proper objects) early in the game. Often, meditating on something can give you a valuable hint on the solution to a puzzle (not always, but sometimes it comes in handy).

With that said, let's do some more exploring. Some of the areas are self-contained puzzles, in that everything you need to solve the problems are around in that area somewhere. You simply have to manage to figure out what to do. Some places will need to be revisited, because you need items from another area. So, the order you visit them isn't too important. Be ready to restore, though, just in case.

Since order isn't absolutely necessary, we'll start at the noon position (so to speak) and work our way around the clock. That's the school, with four rooms in all (you will find that mapping is not necessary in most cases, as the individual areas are fairly small).

Do visit all the rooms and take everything you can get your hot little hands on (somewhere in there, Prof. Parti will show up with some instructions for you). Then, sit at the desk to read the koans. What's a koan? Play the game and find out! (grin) Each koan relates to one of the puzzles you must solve to obtain a key, so read them carefully (you can come back at any time to re-read them, if you need to refresh your memory).

When you are done with the school, return to the lab and try the NE entrance, which leads you to that blue prairie you saw from the window of your apartment. Further, along is the pyramid. Inside it, sitting on a pedestal, is a teddy bear (just what you've always wanted!). Unfortunately, the light reflecting off the pyramid's many surfaces makes vision a bit difficult. In fact, not only difficult, but impossible. Awwwwww.

Well, maybe you should leave that for now and continue onwards to Doc Gravity's world-famous kite races. Make sure you read the flyer that came with the game, as it contains some important information on racing kites (where, by the way, you run and the kite flies, hehe). You'll get something quite useful when you win the race (if you don't win, try again).

East of the lab is the apartment, and you've already been there, so SE is the next stop. Here you find a museum full of interesting exhibits (but don't neglect the outside!). One of them displays a nifty laser, but it's behind glass, and you can't take it (they ARE making things hard for you, aren't they?).

Moving along, you come to an odd display of a large glass slab balanced on a crystal pyramid (no, don't push the slab!). You may want to look at both of them. From there you proceed to another exhibit, showing a waterwheel and a generator. There doesn't seem to be much you can do here, at least not at the moment. Maybe you'll have better luck with the water chamber.

This large room has several controls, as well as inlets and outlets. Plenty for you to fool around with or even drown yourself with, if you aren't careful (save the game before you touch anything). I'll bet you think there's a connection among all these things and you are quite correct, although there might be a

missing connection somewhere. Think about it.

South of the lab is the theater. You won't be able to get in the front door right now, but there is an alleyway with a convenient fire escape to let you in backstage, where you find yourself up on the catwalk. This ain't called a catwalk for nothing, either: go far enough, and you find yourself facing a pretty ferocious feline (He's hungry, and kitty chow isn't on the menu).

Of course, you'll find a way to deal with the cat eventually, and when you do, you can visit a couple of interesting dressing rooms (actually, you can get to one of them right now, if you prefer). One of them has a makeup brush and a souvenir ("Viva Las Vegas!") pillow; the other has the most weird clock you've ever seen. Just be real careful how you handle that clock! (Oooops . . . I told you to be careful, and now you're kinda' dead . . . Well, look around at everything. There's a clue there somewhere on what to do).

Southwest of the lab is the planetarium, a pretty dark place (as might be expected). Without a light source, you probably won't get very far (at least you don't have to worry about grues!). When you can find your way around, one thing you'll pass is a small exhibit on the vacuum of space: a jar with a key inside. You may be tempted to break the jar. I wouldn't advise it, at least not without some way of keeping yourself in one piece.

Further on is the projector room. Too bad the projector isn't working these days, or you could get to see a neat star show. Looks like a part of the device is missing . . . (sigh!). Then again, who knows . . . you might come across the missing part somewhere or other. Whatever you do, look around a bit more before you leave.

To the west of the lab is the pond area, with some other places of interest, especially the clearing where a huge *pinata* hangs from a tree. I wonder what could be inside? You could break it and find out, if only you had something to break it with.

Aha, a duck! Well, what else would you expect to find around a duck pond? Ok, maybe not a duck in a Groucho mask ("Say the secret word."), but this feathered friend can be very helpful to you, in more ways than one. A leisurely stroll around the pond and environs will show you that.

Finally, northwest of the lab is the fair grounds. Here you can re-live your childhood by playing ring toss (just try to figure out the right prize to take . . . hehe!) and upset your stomach with rollercoasters and other fun rides. There is Karni's Korner, where you can take the Milky Way quiz (I hope you're up on your astronomy and candy . . . you simply have to know the right answers, there are no clues in the game to this. Also, you only get one chance to take the quiz, so save first!). Everything here, by the way, is self-contained, so you should have little trouble at all obtaining the key (sure Scorp, easy for you to say...grin).

Hmm, that does seem to complete our tour of all the places around the lab. By this time (with perhaps a little back-tracking now and then), you should have all the keys and shutdown elements. So, don't just stand there. Go put the keys in the desk and get your diploma. Showtime is almost here!

However, before you go running off to the theater, you'll want to be carrying all those shutdown elements . . . you may not have much time on your way back to pick them up (this means, ahem, that you'll have to er, drop your jeans to make room for everything . . . hope you aren't the shy type . . . hehe!).

So, at last, you get to see Fred, A Star! Look fast, though, because he won't be there for very long and other things are going to start happening about now, like the shutdown. Uh oh. What are you going to do about this? Well, maybe you should sleep on it, and the answer will come to you (grin).

One word of caution here to IBM owners: the version I played had a flaw in it: while I had all five shutdown elements, the program insisted on telling me I only had four of them. This caused me a lot of unnecessary grief and running around looking for something I already had. Fortunately, this did not affect winning, since I was able to complete the end game without any problems (whew). As to what that particular item was (and it was always the same one), I'll just say it was no bull.

Well, I see by the old invisible clock on the wall it's about that time again. If you need help with an adventure game, you can reach me in the following ways:

On Delphi: Visit the GameSIG (under the Groups and Clubs menu). **On GEnie:** Stop by the Games RoundTable (type: Scorpia to reach the Games RT). **On The Source:** Send SMail to ST1030. **By US Mail** (Enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you live in the US and want a reply!): Scorpia, PO Box 338, Gracie Station, NY NY 10028.

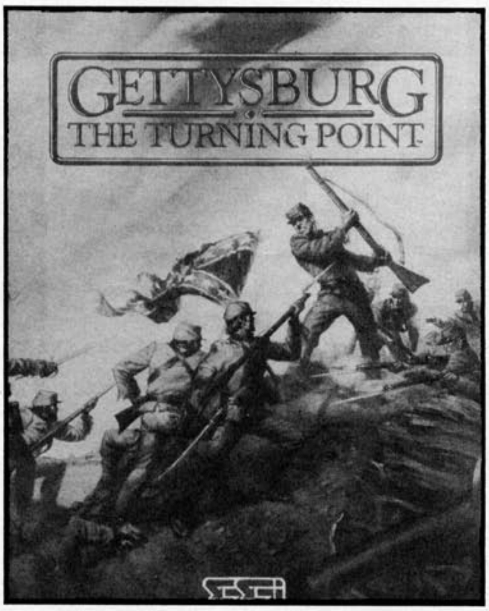
Until next time, happy adventuring!

View From A Playtester

The Amiga Conversion of "*Gettysburg: The Turning Point*"

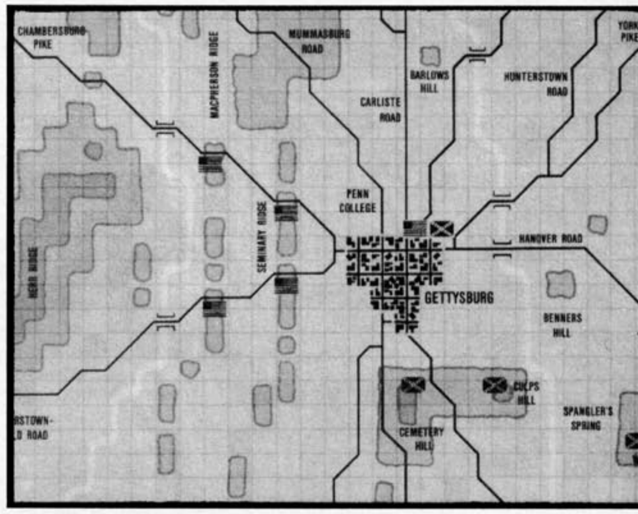
by R. F. Batchelder

When **Strategic Simulations, Inc.** released *Gettysburg: The Turning Point* in July, 1986, it was an immediate success. Released for the Apple II family of computers, it was soon followed with ports for the 8-bit Commodore and Atari, as well as IBM PC. If you owned one of the new 16-bit computers, you were out of luck. Well, there is good news. SSI has finally released a new port for the Amiga. The usual procedure is to make any convesion a straight port with provision for mouse and enhanced graphics and sound. Gettysburg, though, is an exception to the rule. From the moment you boot it up, Gettysburg on the Amiga will simply blow you away. Gone are the stark white lines with black background that has characterized practically all SSI wargames to date. Your battle map is now a pleasing green that is reminiscent of the *Wargame Construction Set*. Higher elevations are progressively lighter and outlined in brown for easy viewing, giving the whole map a completely different appearance from that of its 8-bit cousin. In fact, it is almost a bird's eye view. Roads are a dusty brown and rivers, creeks, or runs are a rippled blue. The town actually looks like a small town viewed from overhead and trees are portrayed so that there is no mistaking what were unidentifiable blobs on some 8-bits.



One of the most significant graphic improvements for game play is that units no longer block out the terrain they occupy. No longer will players have to access the terrain key in order to determine if their units are in advantageous terrain or are sitting ducks out in the open.

Of course, since this is an Amiga port, one would expect more than improved graphics. Another strong point of this conversion, like its predecessor on the 16-bit, *Kampfgruppe*, is that of sound. Particularly impressive is the artillery fire



which was digitized right out of a Hollywood movie. Another pleasant audio surprise is the "Runaway!" screamed by routing troops as they flee the field (Hmm! I didn't think that was an American Civil War film.)

Another nice feature is the player's option of using the familiar SSI keyboard configuration, IBM configuration, or mouse interface. All three are easy to use, so it depends entirely on the player's preference. There is even an option to use both mouse and keyboard.

Applause and plaudits go to Eric Hyman for this tremendous little gem. Amiga owners may recognize him as the fellow responsible for *Kampfgruppe* on the Amiga. Though the product has been long in the making, the wait has definitely been worth it. We should also be hearing a lot more from Eric Hyman, since several more of SSI's ACW series of games are in the planning stages.

As with most things in life, one must take the good with the bad. So it is with Gettysburg on the Amiga. While some marvelous changes have been made for the port, the basic game system has remained the same. Personally, this gamer would have loved to have seen a few changes. For example, it would have been nice to have a random retreat plot instead of the usual predictable one. After all, is anything really predictable in war? How about permanent loss of efficiency when a unit takes casualties? It's hard to understand how a unit could suffer 40 to 50% casualties and have the same efficiency. Every gamer probably has their own changes they would like to see made.

Interestingly enough, SSI has always been responsive to gamers when they engage them in discussion or correspondence. Nevertheless, at the present, SSI feels that sales for the Amiga ports do not justify any changes other than those for ease of game play. One can understand this attitude, why make changes if sales do not warrant them? So, I encourage fellow wargamers to buy those Amiga ports if you want to be able to argue for more substantive changes. Above all, I encourage you not to pirate any programs. Is it possible that the low sales which SSI feels do not justify design changes are due to piracy? Since SSI games have provided me with many hours of enjoyment, I would feel badly if they reduced their commitment to wargames, due to low sales.

Gettysburg is an award winner and the Amiga port definitely enhances this program. Therefore, it you should be able to concur with me that this improved version is definitely worth the price.

KOEI



More than five years a best seller

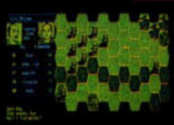
Greatest simulation game released in Japan



$59.95

Nobunaga's Ambition

The Struggle to Unite Japan





For the IBM PC and most compatibles

The Japan most people don't know about. The Warring States period of the sixteenth century. Central government was weak and ineffective as feudal lords called daimyos gained power. Each daimyo ruled a single fief, each wanted to rule the nation. One man, Nobunaga Oda, came close but failed. He paid the price for failure, death.

Nobunaga's Ambition is a military, economic and diplomatic simulation for one to eight that puts you in Nobunaga's place, or in the place of one of his rivals. You start with one fief and try to take the entire nation. A game of both strategy and tactics, success takes careful planning and opportunism.

Administer your fiefs during peace to increase their strength. Keep your peasants and army loyal or risk revolt. Use your resources effectively, not spending too much on either guns or butter. Negotiate with other daimyos, or perhaps you'd rather just send ninja.

On the battlefield, control your troops in close tactical detail. Take advantage of terrain, attack, retreat, fight a war of attrition or go directly after the enemy general. Just be sure your side is smarter, tougher and better prepared.

Nobunaga's Ambition is fast moving and easy to play but historically accurate. Characters and game events come from the reality of sixteenth century Japan. Maps are almost entirely accurate, both geographically and politically. Advanced graphics and animation help give the game a feel of complete reality. One to eight may play either of two scenarios and five different levels of difficulty. Instruction manual and historical notes included.

Some comments from Japan's leading computer magazines:

"If you own a computer you've got to try this game".
OH! PC
January, 1987

"If the user can supply intelligence and imagination, Nobunaga's Ambition will provide more and better entertainment than any other game on the market".
Enter
August, 1986

"First released more than five years ago, Nobunaga's Ambition is still not just a best seller but one of the very best simulation games on the market".
Popcom magazine
January, 1987

"Nobunaga's Ambition is the absolute pinnacle of simulation gaming".
Mainichi Shimbun
May 7, 1987

"A great hit"
Asahi Shimbun
February 20, 1986

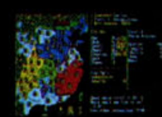
"Far and away the most authentic simulation game I've ever seen".
Hiroharu Seki, professor of Political Science at University of Tokyo in an interview with *Tokyo Newspaper*.



$69.95

Romance of The Three Kingdoms

Live Second Century China





For the IBM PC and most compatibles

China's second Han dynasty has collapsed. The entire nation battles with itself as warlords struggle for supremacy. You are a Master, one of these warlords determined to beat out the others and control the country.

Manage the states under your control to increase their power and resources. Cope with disasters, both natural and otherwise, when they occur. Choose good subordinates and win their loyalty. Negotiate with other Masters, or take a less diplomatic approach, controlling your armies and those of your generals in great tactical detail on the battlefield. Take advantage of terrain as best you can. Choose the right kind of attack for the situation, or just try and trick the enemy. Do what the immediate situation calls for but don't fail to think ahead.

A huge data base together with advanced graphics, animation and programming give the game an unprecedented degree of reality. Romance of The Three Kingdoms is based painstakingly on the Chinese epic novel of the same name, but is fast moving and easy to play. Features include:

*255 characters, each with a distinct personality
*Military, economic and diplomatic simulation
*Five different scenarios
*Ten levels of difficulty per scenario
*Play by one to eight
*Demonstration mode
*Complete instruction manual and historical notes.

"Our highest accolade to Koei's Romance of The Three Kingdoms".
Popcom magazine
May, 1987

"Highest award for a simulation game".
"All around best game".
Login
July, 1987

"A simulation game without peer".
Enter
August, 1986

"Romance of the Three Kingdoms is simulation gaming at its absolute best".
Technopolis
July, 1986

"Romance of The Three Kingdoms is a simulation war game that will strengthen any businessman's ability to work through a problem, logically or intuitively".
P. C. magazine
October, 1986

"Romance of the Three Kingdoms may be pricey but the entertainment it provides makes it a good buy at any price".
OH! FM
March, 1987

For IBM* and compatibles

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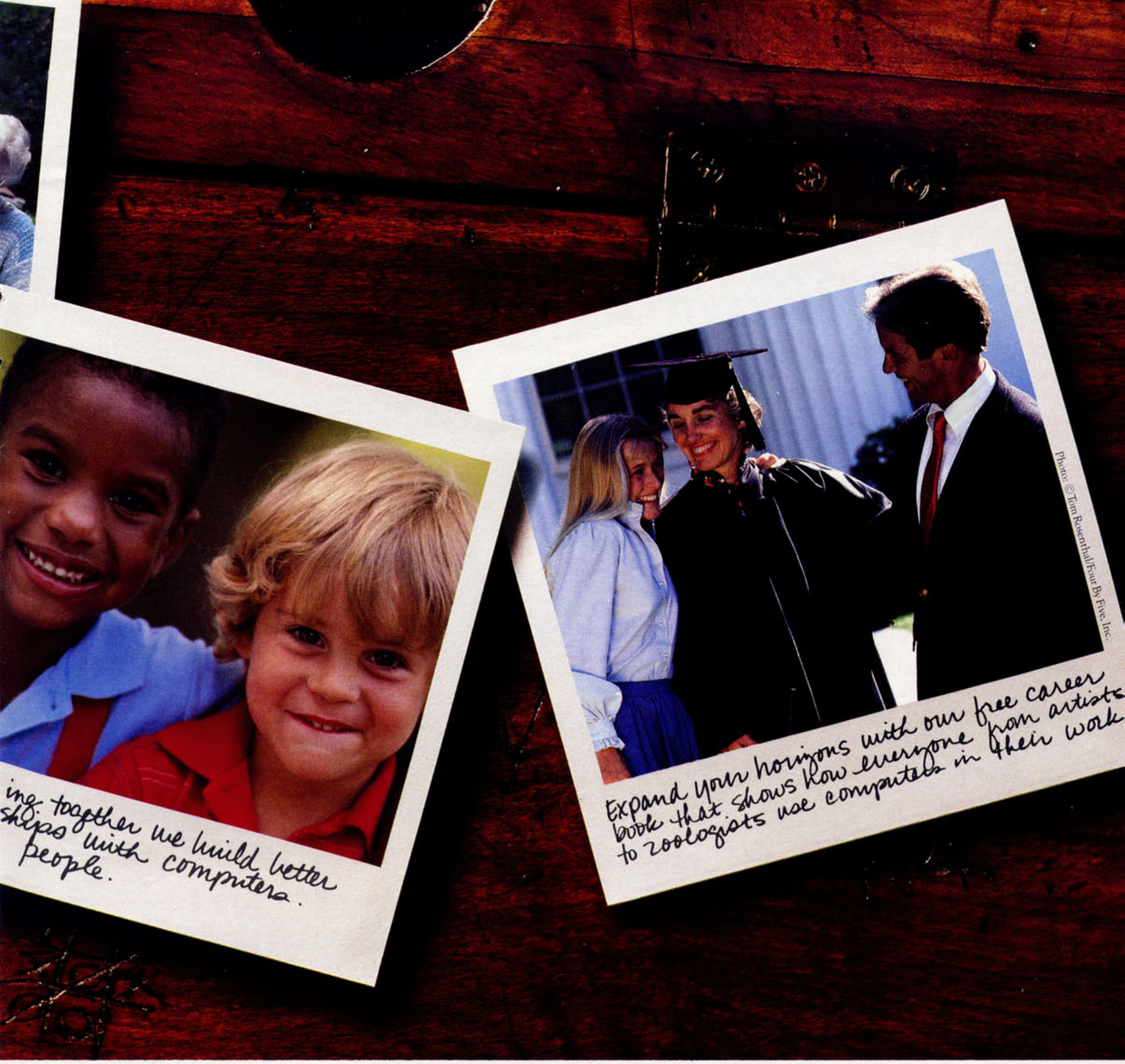
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DUNGEON MASTERS ASSISTANT, VOLUME I: ENCOUNTERS is a utility program designed to help Dungeon Masters generate encounters for AD&D® campaigns. It provides more than 1000 encounters, and over 1300 monsters and characters, including all of the monsters found in AD&D® *Monster Manuals I & II*. DMs can modify the existing data and add original monsters and encounters to the database.



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STRATEGIC SIMULATIONS, INC.

CAMPAIGN '88

(Continued from page 36)



It may sound like an "issue" that could get your candidate in trouble, but it isn't really a problem until your candidate gets specific about what he/she is going to *do* about the deficit. That is where candidates start to lose votes, as well as gain them in Page's trade-off. Whatever you do, though, do not use up all the available celebrity visits or you won't have any extra boost for the final phase.

The third phase involves "Contrast/Attack." The game does not really make any allowance for this period which usually takes place from 21-5 days before the election. This would make the game more interesting if such a provision were included, but may be just as well omitted since it is also the area where a politician is most likely to have his tactic backfire. The lack of opportunity to do this should remind the player of the necessity of taking Page's high ground of consensus.

Finally, there is the "Bandwagon" phase from 5 days prior until the election. Players should hold some high profile celebrities in reserve for this final week of campaigning and a significant war chest of media dollars for one last media blitz. The impression to be desired in this phase is that your candidate is well-known, competent, and the inevitable winner. Sound familiar?

Frankly, *On The Campaign Trail* is an awesome program that can teach players more about politics than several college courses. However, the program uses so many different demographics and variables that it is often slow in execution. Every media buy must be calculated separately and the interface requires the same basic information to be reset over and over again when using the "Media" option. If the simulation could only be sped up and made more friendly, this would be the perfect election game. It offers play balance, sound political principles, and numerous options. What more could one ask?

Hail To The Chief

Each of these software products offers valuable insights on elections in the United States. Some of the insights are rather frightening, but all are enlightening. This reviewer only wishes that more eighth grade courses in the constitution and high school courses in civics had access to this software. It might make a lasting difference.

The Politics of War

(Continued from page 34)

events, Nobunaga had subdued circa one-half of Japan before his career ended by treacherous means. His protege, Tokugawa Ieyasau, completed Oda's dream by uniting Japan and becoming Sei-i-taishogun (Commander-in-Chief of the Empire) in 1603. His dynasty ruled for the next three centuries.

In *Nobunaga's Ambition*, the player's role is to begin as a daimyo and strive for the Shogunate. While beginning as Oda has certain advantages, there are forty-nine (49) other daimyos available as well, each with his own distinct personality.

High Gloss Presentation

The documentation is highly polished. As a bonus, Koei has included a 17" x 22" poster. On the obverse is a map of Japan delineating the fifty (50) fiefs, sites of major battles during the Warring States Period, the route of march of Oda Nobunaga himself, and computer generated visages of the daimyos (feudal lords).

The documentation is complete and well-indexed. Although somewhat long (123 pages), half of the documentation is composed of historical sketches of the daimyos, a historical chronology and a discourse on Oda Nobunaga's life and times.

The graphics for *Nobunaga's Ambition* are among the best that this reviewer has ever seen for the IBM. While much of the graphics are composed of maps, the small touches reveal the craft that went into this product. Thus, when the daimyo distributes rice to the peasants, a vignette shows the lord throwing sheaves to the peasants who gratefully pick it up; as taxes are increased, the peasants flow with tears.

When war begins, the screen changes to a 5x10 hex area for the execution of the battle. Terrain is effectively delineated as hill, mountain, village, river, plain or castle; deployment is dependent on the route of invasion.

Overall, the graphics were surprisingly good, and more reminiscent of Amiga/ST graphics than IBM.

Highly Efficient Interface

After deciding upon a daimyo, one must select a persona. Akin to role playing games, characteristics are composed of health, ambition, luck, charm and IQ. Generally, one should reselect if any single characteristic is under 80 (especially luck and/or IQ; there is nothing worse than a stupid daimyo).

The main display shows the regional fiefdoms. Initial selection may be made for a 17-fief game (central Japan) or a 50-fief game (the entire Home Islands). While the documentation notes that a 17-fief scenario may be completed in 4 hours, this reviewer took 17 hours to complete the game successfully.

Each turn (year) is composed of four seasons, during which the daimyo ages (and will eventually die of old age). Each daimyo may accomplish one action each season for each fief he personally controls; these actions often affect other parameters of play.

One may transfer soldiers between fiefs, go to war, increase taxes (which causes a decrease in peasant loyalty which may lead to rebellion), transfer rice or gold to another fief, raise the level of flood control (which decreases productivity), make a non-aggression pact or arrange a marriage, cultivate (which increases productivity, but decreases peasant loyalty), use a merchant (to buy/sell rice, borrow funds, or purchase weapons), recruit for the military (soldiers or ninja), train the army (which increases fighting efficiency), spy on a rival, expand a town (which increases taxes collected, but decreases peasant loyalty), give food/rice to peasants/soldiers (to raise morale), steal peasants from rival daimyos, allocate military strength, recuperate (even a daimyo can get sick), turn over a controlled fief to the computer for administration, or pass a turn (hint: when one has no idea of what to do, train the troops.)

High Profile Critique

Nobunaga's Ambition has been released in Japan for five years. Yet, the game is fresh. Bill Swartz, who translated the game for the U.S. market, notes that the product has been through five major and, at least, four minor revisions before the current American product. Koei contends that the game is as historically accurate as possible (by the way, although

computer levels range from 1-5, level 1 is probably the most historical).

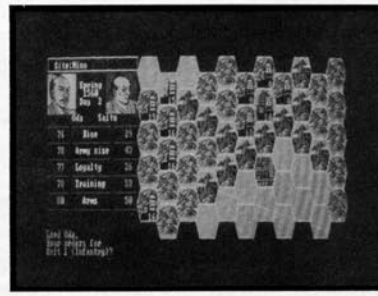
This reviewer thoroughly enjoyed *Nobunaga's Ambition*. Since any product can be improved, the following criticisms are noted:

(1) This reviewer felt that the randomness of the initial character generation served no purpose. However, Koei has pointed out that in multi-player games, a stupid daimyo on the active player's border is an asset beyond redemption. Also, the expert may wish to strive for success with a sub-optimized daimyo. Koei stresses that *Nobunaga's Ambition* is both a solitaire and a multi-player game.

(2) While initial battles are interesting, too many battles can quickly generate battle fatigue; a quick combat option (a la *Roadwar 2000*) would have been appreciated. Koei's latest product (*Genghis Khan*), due in November, does have a quick combat resolution mode.

(3) While Koei has tested their products on numerous configurations and passed with flying colors, this reviewer's **Zenith** did have some problems, e.g. the "0" key would not work and the NumLock zero had to be used (the comma key). and while the game could be saved, a saved game could not be reloaded on the Zenith, although it worked fine on the **Commodore PC-10-2**. Will you have problems? Probably not, but this is the first problem that this reviewer has had with the Zenith.

The product retails at $59.95, which brings it to the higher end of the computer game scale. In terms of dollars per hour of computer enjoyment, though, Koei games are relatively cheap. In fact, Nobunaga retails in Japan for 9800 yen (c. $76.56). So, even with yen inflation, the American pricing does have its advantages.





Highly Recommended

This reviewer was glued to his computer for 13 hours, stopping at 3:00 am. Not since *Gunship* has this occurred. The end result is that the computer gamer *must* have, at least, one Koei game in his inventory! By the way, if your local store does not handle Koei, they will handle direct sales for customers without access to stores (c/o Koei Corporation, 20000 Mariner Avenue, Suite 100, Torrance, CA 90503).

Circle Reader Service #46

Circle Reader Service #47

Circle Reader Service #48

Video Gaming World

Video Gaming World's Newswire

Videogame manufacturers are tagging sports stars as spokesmen for Autumn ad campaigns. St. Louis Cardinal Ozzie Smith, Washington Redskin Doug Williams, and NBA slam-dunk champ, Spud Webb, will headline the **Atari** videogame ads. Chicago Bear Walter Payton and future Hall of Famer Reggie Jackson are **Sega** spokesmen for new sports games. Meanwhile, **Acclaim** tagged the biggest star of them all, 7'5" and 500 pound Andre the Giant, to tout their upcoming *WWF WrestleMania* for NES. Crowds lined up at the Summer Consumer Electronics Show to meet the monolithic monster and get his autograph . . . **Activision** went to the arcades for its latest 2600 videogame titles: *Commando*, a crusade through enemy territory armed only with a machine gun and hand grenades, and *Kung Fu Master*, a martial arts battle through a wizard's temple in order to rescue the captive maiden. Both will be available this Fall. . . **Atari** will introduce 45 new games this year and plans to spend $10 million on an ad blitz. Many of the games will be translations of hit game originally produced for computer gaming by such companies as **Accolade, Broderbund, Cosmi, Data East, Epyx, Electronic Arts, LucasFilm,** and others . . .*The Flying Dragon* (**Culture Brain**) is yet another oriental import scheduled to arrive in the USA next spring. The hero must fight in a four-part battle against The Tusk







Andre the Giant at the Summer CES (top). Culture Brain's The Flying Dragon (left), & LJN Toys' Who Framed Roger Rabbit (above).

Soldiers, mysterious enemies from another world. It is martial mayhem against wrestlers, kick boxers, and other super fighters . . . **Home Express**, a chain of retail stores, named **Nintendo** their "Vendor of the Year." The award was presented to honor the vendor "who has given us the most merchandising support throughout the year" . . .

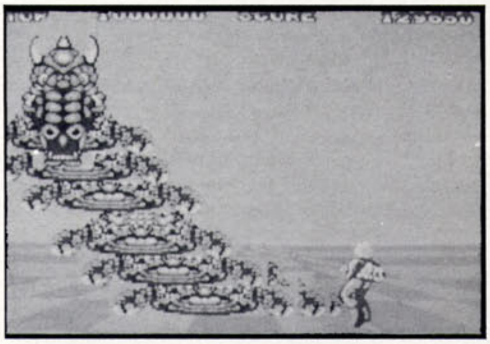
After one of the licensing coups of the year, **FCI** programmed *Ultima* for play on the **Nintendo**. Already a best-seller in Japan, the computer game classic grants control of four characters in a role-playing assault against evil. Said to have over 100 hours of game time . . . **Capcom** watched cartoons for inspiration to design their latest. Scheduled for Winter 1988 release, *Mickey Mouse* is a romp through Wonderland as Mickey and Minnie help Alice escape the evil queen . . . **LJN Toys** went on a license-shopping binge this year! *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* is the latest videogame drawn from the movies announced by the licensing giant who has already spent big bucks for rights to the hit movies, *Jaws, A Nightmare on Elm Street*, and *Friday the 13th* .

. . Hoop fans should be watching out for *Double Dribble* (**Konami** is publishing for NES). This five-on-five basketball game has simultaneous play for two players, as well as competition against the computer . . . An advance look at **Sega**'s *Monopoly* indicates this could be a masterpiece. Up to ten human or computer opponents (or any combination thereof) compete on a beautifully reproduced playfield which includes, among many other niceties, animated dice and tokens. It looks like a faithful recreation of the classic **Parker Brothers** game . . . The videogame industry is coping with a chip shortage that has some games indefinitely postponed and others in short supply. Some companies estimate they'll only receive 30% of the games they order from **Nintendo** (who manufactures the cartridges and packaging for their third party licensees). Others set the figure at a more optimistic 70%. Bob Bernstein, VP of Sales & Marketing for **SunSoft** discussed the problem with CGW: "The chip problem will delay shipment, but not stop it. The numbers [of games on the market] will be less than expected until after the end of this year." Bernstein described his company's philosophy of new game releases: "We decided to ship all the titles announced, rather than concentrating on larger numbers of just a few titles." (The **SunSoft** titles slated for Autumn release are: *Platoon, Blaster Master,* and later this year, *Xenophobe*. Bernstein added a rueful comment: "The industry is in a tremendous growth period. This [shortage] may weed out the smaller, newer or inexperienced companies." What does this mean to the videogamer? This fall, some of the scheduled games may have delayed releases and others may not appear until next year . . . or never. There should be plenty of software available, but when a retailer sells out, there

could be delay in getting reorders filled. If you see a title you would like, buy it quickly, before the merchant runs out of supplies!

—Joyce Worley

Sega bases its system's reputation on software that is, as Buster Poindexter says, "Hot, hot, hot!" *Choplifter, Afterburner*, and the two 3-D titles, *3-D Missile Defense* and *Zaxxon-3D*, all promise and, to various degrees, deliver genuine arcade quality chills, thrills and graphics.



TITLE:	Space Harrier
SYSTEM:	Sega
# PLAYERS:	1
PRICE:	$43.00
PUBLISHER:	Sega

The latest entry in this tradition is *Space Harrier*, a modified first-person perspective marathon of destruction that is the best arcade shoot-'em-up of the year. Nothing else **Sega** has done, in two *or* three dimensions, surpasses this faster-than-light roller coaster ride through a realm inhabited by mythological monsters, jet planes, woolly mammoths, leviathan canaries, gigantic killer robots and much, *much* more.

The player is cast as the Space Harrier, equipped with a jet-propelled backpack and armed with an automatic weapon capable of discharging an infinite number of pulse-like bursts. The Harrier is viewed from a position just behind him, much as the player's vehicle is seen in games like *Pole Position*. The difference here is that the Harrier can fly over the checkerboard landscape at tremendous speeds.

Two types of objects appear on the landscape: enemy creatures and inert objects (like trees, rocks, weeds and mushrooms) which can be obliterated with the rifle and indestuctible structures (such as the Tower of Doom, The Matsutake Mushroom, the Incaic Poles and the Tower of Swords) which cannot be affected. The player must destroy the destructable and avoid the indestructable while travelling at great speeds through nine levels of increasing difficulty.

Warning: This is a game designed for arcade sharpshooters, but it *can* be played, if not entirely mastered, by those of us who know our hand-eye coordination is on the downslide. It takes perseverance, since the game moves at blinding speed, but it can be done. The trick is in developing a sense for the rhythms of the game.

The graphics are tremendously impressive and have an astonishing range of targets and obstacles. Personal favorites include the Tomos, metal spheres which spread their "petals" in order to attack and who are vulnerable only when in this mode. The most impressive thing about this game, however, is the speed at which all this occurs. At first, it seems almost faster than mind and eye can track, but the human eye soon adjusts to the frenetic pace.

The only quibble with the graphics is that when the Space Harrier takes a hit, all on-screen action freezes, including explosions. This looks, in effect, a little silly.

At the end of each level, the player must face off against a "Boss" monster, like the serpentine Squilla, the rock-like Syura and the twin-headed Salpedon. These harrowing creatures can only be destroyed by 16 clean hits to the head.

For pure visceral excitement, *Space Harrier* is as excitng a game as this reviewer has ever played. So, strap on that backpack, flip the release on the pulse rifle and start shooting!

—Bill Kunkel



TITLE:	Tiger-Heli
SYSTEM:	NES
# PLAYERS:	1-2
PRICE:	$30-$35.00
PUBLISHER:	Acclaim Entertainment

***T**iger-Heli* is an excellent videogame version of the popular **Taito** coin-op game. A straight-ahead blast-a-thon, *Tiger-Heli* puts the user in the cockpit of the ultimate stealth jetcopter, a turbo-powered aircraft armed with heat-seeking missiles and destructive impact bombs.

According to the instructions, the terrorist nation Cantun is about to launch an attack on "the whole world" (they may not be smart, but they sure are ambitious!). To that end, Cantun is mobilizing all its carriers, bombers, anti-tank attack modules and soldiers at an "impenetrable military base . . . hidden deep in the center of the country."

So, it's all up to the Tiger-Heli, the only aircraft capable of reaching Cantun's formidable defenses. Blasting away at everything that moves and most things that don't, the armed jetcopter passes over an impressive array of landscapes while facing off against the assembled might of Cantun's war machine.

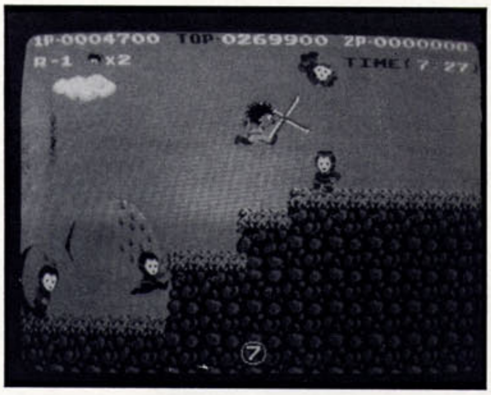
Tiger-Heli combines an effective overhead perspective with a smooth vertical scrolling to create a compelling action entertainment. Visually, the game is broken into landscape zones which include residential areas, desert and waterways, each with its own compatible battle machines. Objects and topography are nicely delineated to create a vividly realistic effect that is almost cinematic in its kinetic intensity.

Players use the control pad to steer the Tiger-Heli left, right, up or down. The dual action buttons control an unlimited supply of heat-seeking missiles and a maximum of two impact boms (which can easily wipe out all on-screen enemy installations). Along the way, there are various bonus objects which can either be shot to obtain extra points or utilized in conjunction with the copter. There are extra bombs and bonus blocks (which can be collected for additional lives) and a pair of support helicopters which the craft can link-up with for added firepower.

There are only two problems with the game. First, even with good graphics, it is almost impossible to determine the jetcopter's altitude. Second, it is too easy to accidentally discharge an impact bomb while firing missiles. Thankfully, neither of these weaknesses create serious problems for *Tiger-Heli*. Therefore, it is one of the most exciting arcade shoot-'em-ups to turn up on the NES.

—Bill Kunkel

Kid Niki, Radical Ninja is yet another in the seemingly endless parade of horizontally-scrolling running/jumping/shooting games for the **Nintendo Entertainment System**. This time, the player takes the role of Kid-Niki, a pint-sized martial artist with spiked-out hair who is moving from left to right over a danger-fraught landscape in search of the great videogame MacGuffin, the kidnapped girlfriend. The girl's name is Princess Margo and the fiend who snatched her is known as The Stone Wizard and, as usual, the heel has left behnd several flavors of under-demons to discourage Kid-Niki's pursuit. As with all games of this type (*Super Mario Bros., Karnov, Ghosts 'n' Goblins* etc.), the only distinctive elements are the player-character's choice of weapon and the enemies who bedevil him along his quest. Kid-Niki is a sword-guy, which means he lacks a projectile weapon and must walk right up to his enemies in order to dispatch them.



TITLE:	Kid Niki, Radical Ninja
SYSTEM:	NES
# PLAYERS:	1-2
PRICE:	$44.95
PUBLISHER:	Data East

As for the enemies, they are an imaginative-looking bunch. There are Red Foxes and Striped Foxes. These guys are not actually foxes at all, but a battalion of midget martial artists in hockey goaltender masks a la Jason fromm *Friday the 13th*. There are living kites which protect the wizard's castle, Chubbies (who use beads for weapons, though I can't imagine why), Masked Devils (who employ deadly bubbles, of all things) and several types of cute, but lethal birds.

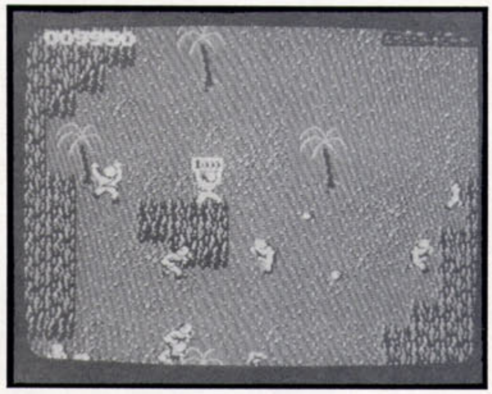
Each of the game's seven levels also has a Big Boss monster. These specially-empowered heavy hitters include: Death Breath, Stone Buddah, Horned Witch, Samurai Guard, Green Grub, Mad Monk and, of course, Stone Wizard himself. There are also several bonus objects, including the powerful golden and silver bells. The golden ones kill enemies from a distance while the silver acts as a protective forcefield. There are coins, scrolls (one for each Big Boss) and the totally inexplicable "Mini Kid-Nikis" and "Mini Princesses" which can be good for extra lives.

Though the game's background could literally be taken from any of the games in this genre, the character animations are especially cute and colorful. *Kid-Niki* opens with a non-interactive sequence in which a bird bursts through the paper walls of the Kid's martial arts school. It continues in this whimsical vein through all seven racks. Of course, Niki's sword doesn't look anything like a sword and most players will probably assume this twirling weapon is a pair of nunchuks or a kendo stick, but so what?

If running/jumping/shooting contests are to your tste, you will enjoy *Kid Niki*. One does have to wonder, though, how many of these interchangeable games **Nintendo** will authorize. Even devotees must be getting tired of the same game in different disguises.

—Bill Kunkel

Limber up your button-pressing fingers and prepare for a supreme arcade action test. *Commando* has arrived in a home edition for the **Nintendo Entertainment System**. From the moment the helicopter deposits Super Joe in the heart of enemy territory, **Capcom**'s greatest creation delivers relentless fire-and-movement action.



TITLE:	Commando
SYSTEM:	NES
# PLAYERS:	1-2
PRICE:	$29.95
PUBLISHER:	Capcom

The gamer controls a soldier armed with a rifle and a limited supply of hand grenades in a one-man assault against four playfields packed with hostile patrols, entrenched troopers and defensive fortifications. To win, Super Joe must blast through the defenders, enter the underground shelter, and rescue the hostages whom the enemy has hidden there. The hero starts the game with four lives, but can earn extra ones.

The control pad moves Super Joe in any of eight directions. Button "B" fires the rifle, while Button "A" throws a grenade. Aiming is automatic. Super Joe always shoots the gun and tosses grenades in the direction in which he is currently moving. This makes the commando particularly vulnerable to attacks from the rear or the flanks. It is a good tactic to keep moving in an irregular path that frustrates attempts to catch Super Joe in a "nutcracker."

The vertically scrolling, multi-screen playfield shows the action in modified overhead perspective. The vantage point is above and slightly behind the advancing commando. This gives objects a solid look which is often lacking in programs where the player looks straight down at the battlefield.

Super Joe can find valuable pieces of equipment on the ground and these will make it easier to overcome the lopsided odds against him. The objects are: wireless radio (free passage to the next screen), medal of honor (one extra life), binoculars (finds hidden shelter), bullet-proof vest (protects against both gunfire and grenades), gasoline can (bonus score), flashlight (aids in night-fighting) and hand grenades (additional weapons for Super Joe's limited supply).

Super Joe also gets rewards for killing certain types of foes. Wiping out enemy soldiers with a hand grenade gets K-rations or a bag of money for the hero. Both of these also net bonus points for the player. In the underground, Super Joe gets similar bonuses for eliminating sergeants and lieutenants in the defending force.

Commando is ideal for blast brigaders who want to show their mettle against tenacious computer-directed opposition. Few cartridges can equal its non-stop action. This is one coin-op hit which should certainly prove popular among home videogamers, as well.

—Arnie Katz & Joyce Worley

3.4 - Suspended; M.U.L.E.; Battle for Normandy Strategy; Serpent's Star Hints; Cosmic Balance Contest Results; Knights of the Desert; Galactic Adventures; Computer Golf!; Bomb Alley; and more!

3.5 - Electronic Arts; Combat Leader; Archon; Lode Runner; TAC; Paris in Danger; Cosmic Balance II; Delta Squadron; Zork III Tips; and more!

3.6 - Ultima III; Operation Whirlwind; Reach for the Stars; Legacy of Lylgamyn; Broadsides; North Atlantic '86; Zork II Tips; and more!

4.2 - Chris Crawford on Computer Game Design; Goren's Computerized Bridge; Carrier Force; DIRECTORY OF GAME MANUFACTURERS; Robotwar Tournament Results; M.U.L.E. Designer Notes; Starcross Tips; Parthian Kings; and more!

4.3 - Seven Cities of Gold; View from a Playtester; Universe - Two Reviews; Mig Alley Ace; Questron; Tycoon and Baron; A Broadsides Replay; Chancellor of the Exchequer; Enchanter Tips; Children's Games - A Shopping Guide; Under Southern Skies; Chivalry; and more!

4.4 - Jupiter Mission; Fifth Eskadra; Excalibur review and Designer's Notes; War in Russia; President Elect and 1984; Lode Runner Contest; Fighter Command; Galactic Gladiator Scenarios; Flight Simulator II and Solo Flight; Crypt of Medea; Sorcerer Tips; and more!

4.5 - Staying Alive in Wizardry; Adventure Gaming Conference; CGW Baseball League; The Computer as Opponent; Sundog; CGW Computer Game Conference; Road to Moscow; Strategy Game Tips; Deadline Tips; Seven Cities of Gold Designer Notes; Rails West; and more!

4.6 - Carrier Force Replay; When Superpowers Collide; Mail Order Games; Panzer-jagd Review; More Galactic Gladiator Scenarios; Cutthroat Hints; Should You Turn Pro?; Dreadnoughts; F-15 Strike Eagle; and more!

5.1 - War in Russia Replay (Pt 1); Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy (two articles); A Software Agent Looks at the Industry; Breakthrough in the Ardennes Designer Notes; Gulf Strike; Cosmic Balance Contest Results; Clear for Action; and more!

5.3 - Sports Games Survey; The Battle of Chickamauga; Imperium Galactum; Games You'll Never See; Crusade in Europe Design Notes; Lucasfilm Enters Home Gaming; Baseball Games for Your Computer; Mindwheel Hints; Silicon Cerebrum; Reforger '88; Napoleon at Waterloo; and more!

#26 - Conflict in Viet Nam; Inside Ultima IV; The Halley Project; Silent Service Designer's Notes; The Kobayashi Alternative; Spellbreaker Tips; Koronis Rift; Eidolon; Story Tree; and more!

#27 - Under Fire Replay; Europe Ablaze and U.S.A.A.F.; Map Design for Computers; 7th Fleet; Game Manufacturer Survey; Battle of Antietam; Ballyhoo Tips; and more!

#29 - Battlegroup & Mech Brigade; Psi 5 Trading Co.; Battle of the Atlantic (SimCan); Universe II Playtester Notes; Island of Kesmai; Borrowed Time Tips; Golf Games; Countdown to Shutdown; Moebius; Norway 1985; Clash Of Wills; and more!

#30 - American Dream Review; Phantasie II; Industry Survey; Kobayashi Alternative Revisited; Orbiter and Flight Simulator for Mac; Silent Service for Atari; Championship Basketball; and more!

#31 - Wizard's Crown; Trinity Playing Tips; Operation Keystone; Habitat/Quantumlink; Baseball stat programs; Grand Slam; Race Car Simulator; Amiga graphics/music/video programs; APBA Baseball; Spin Out; World Karate; and more!

#32 - Interview with Alan Miller; Interview with Brian Moriarty; Lords of Conquest review and strategy notes; Alternate Reality; Battlefront; A Mind Forever Voyaging playing tips; Chessmaster 2000; Rommel-Battles For Tobruk; Bronze Dragon; and more!

#33 - Leather Goddesses of Phobos Hints; Computer GamingThe Year in Review; GettysburgThe Turning Point; Shard of Spring; Interview with Chris Crawford (Pt1); DragonFire II; and more!

#34 - MoonMist Hints; Robot Rascals; Defender of the Crown; Iwo Jima/Falklands; Amnesia; Adventure Game Conference; Warship; Interview with Chris Crawford (Pt2); Major Motion; 1985-1986 INDEX; and more!

#35 - COMPUTERS IN FLIGHT ISSUE - The State of the Industry; Gunship; Gemstone Healer Hints; 50 Mission Crush Stories; Space M+A+X; Star Trek: Prom. Prophecy; Starflight; Interview with Doug Crockford; Blue Powder, Grey Smoke; Patton vs Rommel; Strategic Conquest Plus; and more!

#36 - BASEBALL FEVER ISSUE - Baseball Game Survey; Epyx Company Report; War In The South Pacific; Hollywood Hijinx Hints; Might & Magic; Sailing Programs; History of Bruce Artwick's Flight Simulator; Interview with Earl Weaver; Play-By-Mail Games; Ogre, and more!

#37 - WORLD WAR II ISSUE - Survey of WWII Computer Wargames; The Future of Computer Wargaming (1988-1992); Killed Until Dead; Realms of Darkness; Stalingrad Campaign; WWII Tactical Wargames Compared; Full Count Baseball; Electronic Arts Company Report; Wrath of Denethenor; Portal; Warship Scenarios, and more!

#38 - FANTASY/ADVENTURE ISSUE - Bard's Tale II: S.D.I.; Bureaucracy Tips; Sub Battle Simulator; King's Quest III; Computer Role-Playing Games (An Editorial); Battlecruiser; Accolade's Comics; Activision Company Report; Sinbad & Throne of Falcon; Interview with Jon Freeman and Ann Westfall; Where in the USA is Carman Sandiego; and more!

#39 - GAME DESIGN ISSUE - Game Development at Broderbund; Phantasie III; Euclid vs. Patton (Field Algorithms); Dragon Side II Review; Industry Report from C.E.S.; PHM Pegasus; Goodbye "G" Rated Computer Games; Theatre Europe; B-24 Notes; Designer Play Tips on Defender of the Crown; Infocom Company Report; Uninvited reviewed; The Sentry; Zen & the Art of Game Design; and more!

#40 - WARGAMING ISSUE - SSG's Russia (The Great War...); Ultima V and Wizardry IV (Comparative Overview); SimCan's Rommel At Gazala; Lurking Horror Tips; E.O.S.; Guderian; Rebel Charge at Chickamauga; The Best Educational Games of 1987; The Origins of Company Names; Street Sports Baseball; California Games; The Eternal Dagger; Goodbye "G" Rated Computer Games (Part 2); and more!

#41 - SHOPPING GUIDE - Wizardry IV; Make Your Own Murder Party; Microprose Company Report; Hot Titles for Christmas; Stationfall Tips; Ancient Art of War At Sea; Joysticks and Mice; Borodino 1812; Shadowgate; Deep Space; Leisure Suit Larry; Nord and Bert; and more!

#42 - FOOTBALL ISSUE - Plundered Hearts Playing Tips; Computer Football Game Survey; 1987 CGW Game of Year Awards (at Dragon-Con); Project Stealth Fighter; Beyond Zork; Spy Adventure Series; Warship Strategy; Battles In Normandy; Firepower; and more!

#43 - WARGAMING THEN & NOW - Shiloh:Grant's Trial; Border Zone; Mech Brigade Tactics; UMS Preview; High Seas; Darkhorn; Empire; Inside Trader; Legacy of The Ancients; Goodbye "G" Ratings Pt.3; Blackjack Academy; Into The Eagle's Nest; Airborne Ranger; and more!

#44 - FLIGHT ISSUE - Survey of Helicopter Siumulations; Alternate Reality-The Dungeon; Apollo 18; Falcon; Arkanoid; Guild of Thieves; 2400 A.D.; Test Drive; Faery Tale Adventure; Jewels of Darkness; Chuck Yeager Flight Trainer Tidbits; and more!

#45 - SCIENCE FICTION - Space Quest Tips; Space Arcade Games; Computer Games in 1988; The Future of Computer Games (Isaac Asimov, Harry Harrison, Douglas Adams, Jerry Pournelle, and others); Halls of Montezuma; Wasteland Sneak Preview; Skyfox II; Breach; SSI Company Report; Terrorpods; and more!

#46 - SPORTS SURVEY - Spring Sports Survey; Dungeon Master; World Games; Police Quest; Fog of War Roundtable Part 1; Ferrari Formula One Preview; Sherlock; Skate or Die!; Strike Fleet; Demon Stalkers and Gauntlet; Sons of Liberty; Deathlord; Knight Orc; and more!

#47 - MIST, MAGIC & MYSTERY - Ultima V; Wasteland; CRP Editorial by Scorpia; Trust & Betrayal; Panzer Strike; The Future of CRP Games (by Dave Arneson); Game Design Insights from The Journal of Computer Game Design; Echelon; The Train; CRP game hints; Maniac Mansion; Soko-Ban; Tetris; Ports of Call; and more!

#48 - COMBAT! - The Hunt For Red October; Bard's Tale III; Wasteland Hints; Long Lance; Return To Atlantis; Project Stealth Fighter; Universal Military Simulator Modifications; Wooden Ships & Iron Men; Twilight's Ransom; Gaming on Compuserve and GEnie; Video Gaming World (New Department); Mech Brigade Scenario; and more!

#49 - GAME DESIGN - Tom Clancy on Red Storm Rising; Lord British Talks About The Ultima Series; Advanced Dungeons & Dragons; Jinxter Tips by Scorpia; Space Quest II; Infocomics; Computer Gaming Books; Rampage; Decisive Battles of the Civil War; Dark Castle Hints; Romance of the Three Kingdoms; Fire Brigade and more!

#50 - 50th ISSUE CELEBRATION - History of CGW; Questron II; Jet and F/A-18 Interceptor; History of Computer Game Design; Obliterator; Stellar Crusade; Strike Fleet Tactics; Three Stooges; Seven Spirits of Ra; Tobruk-Clash of Armour; Scorpion's Mail; Star Saga I; and more!



Reader Input Device #51

On this page, a number of games and articles are listed for evaluation. Some general interest questions are provided, as well. For each game you have played or article you have read, place a 1 (terrible) through 9 (outstanding) next to the appropriate number on the card provided opposite page 4.

Games

1. Wasteland (EA)
2. Bard's Tale III (EA)
3. Dungeon Master (FTL)
4. Pirates (Microprose)
5. Ultima V (Origin)
6. Falcon (Spectrum Holobyte)
7. Stealth Fighter (Microprose)
8. Faery Tale Adv. (microillusions)
9. Three Stooges (Cinemaware)
10. The Train (Accolade)
11. Airborne Ranger (Microprose)
12. Police Quest (Sierra)
13. Questron II (SSI)
14. Return of Werdna (SirTech)
15. Wings of Fury (Broderbund)
16. Empire (Interstel)
17. Earl Weaver Baseball (EA)
18. Breach (Omnitrend)
19. Under Fire (AH)
20. Star Fleet I (Interstel)
21. Balance of Power (Mindscape)
22. Silent Service (Microprose)
23. Crusade in Europe (Microprose)
24. Decision in the Desert (Microprose)
25. NFL Challenge (XOR)
26. Fire Brigade (Panther)
27. Nobunaga's Ambition (Koei)
28. Rommel: Battles for N. Africa (SSG)
29. Reach for the Stars (3rd Ed.) (SSG)
30. Space M+A+X (Final Frontier)
31. Shufflepuck Cafe (Broderbund)
32. Scruples (Leisure Time Games)
33. John Elway's Quarterback (Melbourne)
34. Beyond Dark Castle (Silicon Beach)
35. PT-109 (Spectrum Holobyte)
36. Indiana Jones & Temple of Doom (Mindscape)
37. Warship (SSI)
38. Jinxter (Rainbird)
39. Infocomics (Infocom)
40. Typhoon Thompson (Broderbund)

Articles

41. Letters
42. Politics of War
43. Campaign '88
44. Neuromancer Sneak Preview
45. William Gibson Interview
46. PT-109 Review
47. Rommel (SSG) Review
48. Dr. Dumont Hints
49. President Missing Review
50. Gettysburg Amiga Notes
51. U.M.S. Review
52. Wings of Fury Review

Questions:

53. Most of the games which I purchase would be classified in the following price range:
a) $9.95-$14.95
b) $19.95-$29.95
c) $34.95-$49.95
d) $59.95-$79.95.

54. Which of the following features would be most attractive to you when considering a purchase:
a) genuine multi-player capability,
b) modem and null-modem capacity,
c) sufficient constructability,
d) a guaranteed 60-80 hours of play,
e) ability to print out a complete record of moves, or
f) other (Please be specific in the space provided on the card).



Strategy

Kampfgruppe 7.66
Gettysburg 7.48
M.U.L.E. 7.44
Mech Brigade 7.28
Chessmaster 2000 7.25
War in Russia 7.20

Action/Adventure

Ultima IV 7.80
Wizardry 7.69
Starflight 7.63
Gunship 7.59
Ultima III 7.55
Might & Magic 7.54
Bard's Tale 7.49

Be it known to all gentle persons that the games inscribed above are honored for their high popularity with the people of our fair land. These august games have been well spoken of by our readers over a goodly period of time and, thereby, have gained the respect and good will of the powers that be at CGW. Be it known to all that read these words that any game found on this list is a game of renown and worthy of play by all.

Venerable titles are gracing the top 10 on the Strategy side. The few recent releases have been panned by our readers, so older titles will be re-rated. Meanwhile, "Earl Weaver Baseball" was the only baseball strategy game to weather the dog days of summer and "Breach" managed to reach third place by shooting the gap left by a group of retreating rebels from Chickamauga.

As for Action/Adventure, gamma particles from "Wasteland" weakened the bard's constitution enough to let the post-holocaust game mutate past "Bard's Tale III."

In addition, "Pirates" threatened naval bombardment against the "Dungeon Master"'s fortress and Sid Meier's crew of ruffians seems on the verge of making Lord British walk the plank by tying "Ultima V." Meanwhile, "The Three Stooges" didn't miss "The Train" as they slapped and gouged their way into ninth position.

Strategy Top 50

Name	Mfg	Machine	Tms Rtd	Avg Rsp	Rating
Empire	Intstel	Many	7	39	7.77
Earl Weaver Bsball	EA	Am,I	8	42	7.35
Breach	Omtrnd	Am,ST,I	5	47	7.11
Star Fleet I	Intstel	Many	5	38	7.08
Balance of Power	Mndscp	M,I	4	28	7.07
Crusade in Europe	MicPr	Many	9	60	7.06
Decision in Desert	MicPr	Many	9	36	7.06
Silent Service	MicPr	Many	6	108	7.06
Under Fire	AH	Ap	6	23	7.06
NFL Challenge	XOR	I,M	5	20	7.05
3-in-1 Football	Hafner	Many	2	20	7.05
Carrier Force	SSI	C,Ap,At	5	108	7.04
War in So. Pac.	SSI	Ap,C	5	23	7.04
Flight Sim II	SubLg	Many	6	84	7.03
Strike Fleet	EA	A,C	4	42	7.03
Micro Lg Baseball	MicLg	Many	4	76	7.02
Reach for Stars	SSG	C,Ap	6	47	7.02
Anc Art War Sea	Brdrbd	I	3	26	7.01
Battle of Antietam	SSI	Many	12	41	7.01
Europe Ablaze	SSG	C,Ap	9	32	7.01
Rebel Charge	SSI	Many	8	28	7.01
Ancient Art of War	Brodr	I,M	10	39	6.99
Russia	SSG	Ap,C	11	32	6.98
Battlegroup	SSI	C,Ap	4	35	6.95
Defender Crown	MstDsg	Many	8	51	6.95
Lords of Conquest	EA	Many	3	42	6.93
Field of Fire	SSI	Ap,C,At	5	67	6.92
U.S.A.A.F.	SSI	C,Ap,At	2	26	6.92
Halls Montezuma	SSG	C,Ap	4	26	6.91
Shiloh: Grant's	SSI	Ap,C,I	4	29	6.90
Battlefront	SSG	Ap,C	8	34	6.89
Roadwar 2000	SSI	Many	3	34	6.80
Computer Ambush	SSI	Many	6	49	6.78
Panzer Strike	SSI	Ap,C	4	28	6.78
Computer Baseball	SSI	All	8	37	6.77
Gato	SpHb	Many	3	79	6.77
Gulf Strike	AH	Many	4	33	6.75
Dec. Battles ACW	SSG	A,C	2	20	6.74
Geopolitique 1990	Th.Mt.	Ap,C	3	29	6.73
No. Atlantic '86	SSI	Ap,M	2	72	6.65
Conflict in Viet	MicPr	Many	5	21	6.63
Battlecruiser	SSI	Ap,At,C	3	29	6.61
Knights of Desert	SSI	Many	5	63	6.61
Chickamauga	GDW	At,C	2	26	6.60
U.M.S.	Rnbrd	ST,I	3	31	6.60
Warship	SSI	Ap,At,C	4	44	6.57
Fifth Eskadra	SimCan	Ap,C,ST	2	20	6.53
Carriers at War	SSG	C,Ap	7	66	6.48
Norway 1985	SSI	Ap,C	4	16	6.48
Jet	Sblgc	Many	4	25	6.45

Adventure/Action Top 50

Name	Mfg	Machine	Tms Rtd	Avg Rsp	Rating
Wasteland	EA	A	3	42	7.94
Bard's Tale III	EA	A, C	2	40	7.82
Dungeon Master	FTL	ST	4	43	7.71
Pirates	MicPr	C,Ap	9	49	7.66
Ultima V	Origin	Ap	2	47	7.66
Falcon	SpHolo	I,M	4	24	7.48
Stealth Fighter	MicPr	C	7	23	7.47
Faery Tale Adv.	Micrill	Many	5	35	7.30
Three Stooges	Cnmwre	Am,C	2	30	7.19
The Train	Acclde	C	1	20	7.17
Phantasie	SSI	Many	10	68	7.13
Bard's Tale II	EA	Ap,Am,C	12	55	7.13
Airborne Ranger	MicPr	C	4	27	7.10
Spellbreaker	Infcm	Many	5	24	7.09
Zork Series	Infcm	Many	7	122	7.09
Archon I	EA	Many	12	96	7.08
Legacy of Llygamyn	SirTc	Ap,I	9	52	7.08
Pinball Const. Set	EA	Many	4	47	7.08
Lode Runner	EA	Many	6	60	7.07
Phantasie II	SSI	Many	6	36	7.07
Questron	SSI	C,Ap,At	6	90	7.07
Sorcerer	Infcm	Many	5	58	7.07
Wizard's Crown	SSI	Many	11	58	7.06
Legacy Ancients	EA	Ap,C	4	46	7.05
World Class Ldr Bd	Access	C	3	23	7.04
Enchanter	Infcm	Many	4	45	7.02
Police Quest	Sierra	I	1	48	7.01
Eternal Dagger	SSI	Ap,At,C	3	28	7.00
One on One	EA	Many	8	75	7.00
Ultima II	Orign	Ap	8	61	7.00
Leather Goddesses	Inf	Many	2	31	6.98
Ultima I	Orign	Ap,C	2	48	6.96
Auto Duel	Orign	Many	2	65	6.95
Deadline	Infcm	Ap,At,I	3	44	6.94
King's Quest II	Sierra	Many	3	20	6.88
Hitchhiker's Guide	Infcm	Many	4	108	6.86
Planetfall	Infcm	Many	3	51	6.86
Beyond Zork	Infcm	Many	2	30	6.80
Return of Werdna	SirTc	Ap	4	21	6.80
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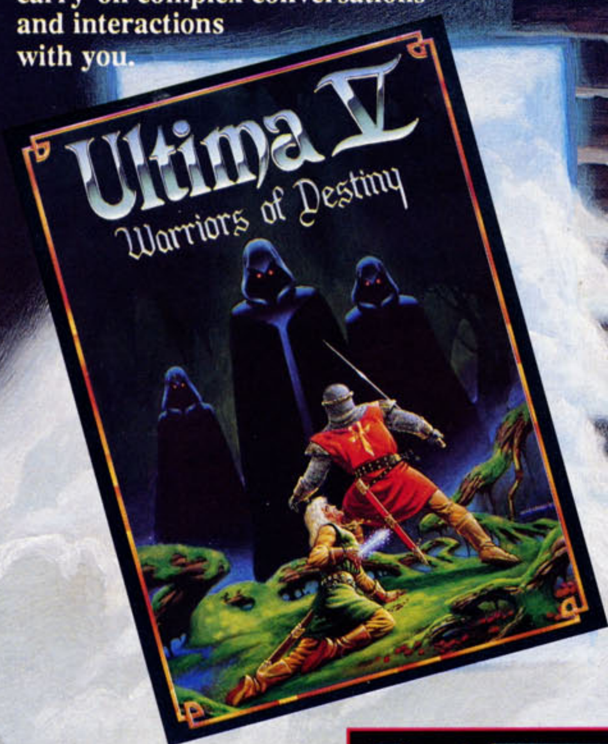
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